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CONSUELO

BY GEORGE SAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY FRANK H. POTTER

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. I

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CONSUELO.

CHAPTER I.

"YES, yes, young ladies ; shake your heads as much as you like ! The best behaved and the cleverest of you all is — but I will not say who ; for she is the only one of my class who has any modesty, and I am afraid that if I were to name her she would instantly lose that rare virtue which I wish" —

"In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti," sang Costanza, impudently.

"Amen," sang all the other young girls in chorus.

"Horrid thing !" said Clorinda, pouting prettily and giving a little tap with the handle of her fan on the bony and wrinkled fingers which the singing master had left lying idly on the silent key-board of the organ.

"Nonsense !" said the old professor, with the profoundly disillusioned air of a man who for forty years has been the butt of all the teasing and all the unruliness of successive generations of female children. "It is likewise certain," he added, putting his spectacles in their case and his tobacco-box in his pocket, without raising his eyes to the mocking, vexed swarm

about him, "that this well-behaved, this docile, this studious, this attentive, this good child, is not you, Signora Clorinda, nor you, Signora Costanza, nor yet you, Signora Zuletta, nor Rosina, and still less Michela" —

"In that case it is I!" — "No, it is I!" — "Not at all, it is I!" — "I!" — "I!" — "I!" cried the soft or piercing voices of some fifty blondes and brunettes, who swooped down on him like a flock of noisy gulls on a poor shell-fish left high and dry on the strand by the retreating tide.

The shell-fish, that is to say, the maestro (for I maintain that no metaphor could be more appropriate to his angular movements, his beady eyes, his cheek-bones blotched with red, and, above all, to the thousand little curls, white and stiff and pointed, of the professorial wig) — the maestro, I say, forced back three times on the bench from which he had tried to rise, but calm and impassive as a shell-fish, rocked and toughened by tempests, refused for a long time to say which of his pupils deserved the praise of which he was usually so sparing, but of which he had just been so prodigal. Finally, yielding as if unwillingly to the prayers which he had slyly provoked, he took the official baton with which he was accustomed to beat time, and with it formed his undisciplined flock into two lines. Then, advancing with a grave air through this double row of giddy pates, he went and stood at the back of the organ-gallery in front of a young girl who sat crouched on a bench, elbows on knees, and fingers

in ears to keep out the noise, practising her lesson in an undertone so as not to disturb any one. She was twisted and doubled up like a little monkey. He, solemn and triumphant, with foot advanced and arm extended, resembled the shepherd Paris awarding the apple, not to the most beautiful, but to the best behaved.

"Consuelo? The Spaniard?" cried the young singers with one voice, all amazement. Then a universal burst of Homeric laughter drove a flush of indignation and anger to the majestic brow of the professor.

Little Consuelo, whose stopped ears had not heard a word of this dialogue, and whose eyes were wandering about without seeing anything, so absorbed was she by her work, remained unconscious of the disturbance for some minutes. Then, perceiving at last the attention of which she was the object, she dropped her hands from her ears to her knees, and her books from her knees to the floor. She sat petrified with astonishment, not confused, but a little frightened, and ended by getting up to see if some strange object or some ridiculous person behind her was not the cause of this noisy gayety, and not herself.

"Consuelo," said the master, taking her hand without further explanation, "come here, my good child; sing me Pergolese's *Salve Regina*, which you have learned this last fortnight, and which Clorinda has been studying for a year."

Consuelo, without replying and without showing

either fear, or pride, or embarrassment, followed the master to the organ, where he sat down again, and, with a look of triumph, gave the pitch to his young pupil. Then Consuelo, simply and easily, poured forth through the lofty arches of the cathedral the most glorious voice with which they had ever rung. She sang the *Salve Regina* without a slip of memory, without giving a note which was not absolutely true, full, sustained, or ended at the right instant; and following with passive exactitude the instructions which the learned master had given her, and rendering with her vigorous powers the just and intelligent intentions of the old man, she did, with the inexperience and carelessness of a child, what knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm could not have caused a consummate artist to do, — she sang faultlessly.

“Very good, my child,” said the old master, always reserved in his compliments. “You have studied attentively, and you sang conscientiously. Next time you may sing the Scarlatti cantata which I taught you.”

“*Si, Signore professore,*” replied Consuelo; “may I go now?”

“Yes, my child. Young ladies, the lesson is finished.”

Consuelo put into a small basket her books, her pencils, and her little black-paper fan, the inseparable plaything of Spanish as well as of Venetian women, and which she hardly ever used, though she always had it with her. Then she disappeared behind the organ-

pipes, slipped as lightly as a mouse down the mysterious stairs which led to the church, knelt a moment as she crossed the nave, and as she was going out, found near the holy-water basin a handsome young gentleman who held out the aspergill to her with a smile. She took some holy-water, and looking straight in his face with the self-possession of a little girl who does not yet think or feel herself a woman, mixed up so drolly her sign of the cross and her thanks that the gentleman began to laugh. Consuelo began to laugh too, and suddenly, as if remembering that some one was waiting, started away and was over the threshold of the church, down the steps, and out of the porch in a twinkling.

Meanwhile the professor had again put his spectacles in the large pocket of his waistcoat, and said to the silent pupils, "Shame on you, my fine young ladies ! This little girl, the youngest of you all, the newest in my class, is the only one of you capable of singing a solo properly ; and in the choruses, no matter what absurdities you commit around her, I always find her as firm and as true as a clavecin note. It is because she has zeal, patience, and what you have not, and never will have, any of you, — *conscience*."

"Ah ! there is his great word," cried Costanza, when he had gone out. "He only said it thirty-nine times during the lesson, and he would be ill if he did not reach the fortieth."

"No wonder that Consuelo makes progress," said Zulettta, "she is so poor. She is hurrying to learn

something as fast as possible, that she may earn her living."

"I have been told that her mother was a Bohemian," added Michelina, "and that she herself used to sing on the streets and highways before she came here. It cannot be denied that she has a fine voice, but she has not a shade of intelligence, poor child! She learns by heart, follows the professor's directions slavishly, and her good lungs do the rest."

"She may have the best of lungs and the finest intelligence to boot," said the handsome Clorinda. "She is welcome to these advantages, so long as I do not have to exchange faces with her."

"You would not lose so very much if you did," replied Costanza, who was not enthusiastic in acknowledging Clorinda's beauty.

"No, she certainly is not pretty," said another. "She is as yellow as an Easter candle, and her big eyes have no expression. Besides, she is always so badly dressed! Decidedly, she is an ugly girl."

"Poor thing! She is very unlucky — no money and no beauty."

And so they ended Consuelo's panegyric, and by pitying her consoled themselves for having admired her while she sang.

CHAPTER II.

THE scene which has been described occurred in Venice about a hundred years ago, in the Church of the Mendicanti, where the celebrated maestro Porpora had just been rehearsing his great musical vespers, which were to be sung there on the following Sunday, the feast of the Assumption. The young choristers whom he had scolded so sharply were pupils of the *scuola*, where they were instructed at the cost of the State, which was to dower them later, "either for marriage or for the cloister," says Jean Jacques Rosseau, who admired their superb voices about this time in this same church. Reader, you must remember these details only too well, and a charming incident which he tells concerning them in the eighth book of the "Confessions." I shall beware of transcribing these adorable pages, for after them you would certainly not return to mine, and I should unquestionably do as much in your place. I shall hope, therefore, that you have not the "Confessions" within reach just now, and go on with my story.

All these young people were not equally poor, and it is very certain that, in spite of the great integrity of the administration, some had slipped in to whom it was rather a speculation than a necessity to receive at the cost of the Republic the training of an artist,

and means to establish themselves in life. It was for this reason that they allowed themselves to forget the sacred laws of equality, by which they had been allowed to take their places on the same benches with their poorer sisters. Nor did all of them share in the austere designs which the Republic had for their future. One or another would break away from time to time, and, having profited by the gratuitous education, give up the dower to seek a more brilliant future elsewhere. The administration, seeing that this was inevitable, had sometimes admitted to the school of music the children of poor artists, whose nomadic existence did not admit of a very long stay in Venice. Among this number was the little Consuelo, who had been born in Spain, and who had come thence to Italy by way of St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Mexico, Archangel, or any other still more direct route, employed peculiarly by Bohemians.

She was a Bohemian only by profession and in name, for by race she was neither Gitana nor Hindoo, nor yet a Jew. She was of good Spanish blood, which was undoubtedly of Moorish origin, for she was decidedly dark, and she possessed a repose which showed no traces of the characteristics of the wandering races. I do not wish to speak ill of these. If I were inventing the character of Consuelo, I do not say that I would not make her descended from the children of Israel, or even from yet older ancestors; but she was formed from a rib of Ishmael, and

everything in her organization showed it. I never saw her, for I am not a hundred years old yet, but I have been told so, and I cannot question the statement. She had not that feverish petulance, broken by fits of apathetic languor, which marks the *zingarelle*, nor had she the insinuating curiosity and the persistent mendicity of the poor *ebbreca*. She was as calm as the water of the lagoons, and at the same time as active as the light gondolas which ceaselessly furrow their surface.

As she grew fast, and as her mother was wretchedly poor, her dresses were always a year too short for her, which gave to her long legs, accustomed to the public gaze, a sort of wild grace and frankness which caused one to feel mingled pleasure and pity. If her foot was small, one could not know it, so badly was it shod. On the other hand, her figure, imprisoned in waists which had grown too small and which were cracking at every seam, was slender and flexible as a young palm-tree, but without form, or roundness, or charm of any sort. The poor child hardly thought of it, accustomed as she was to being called "monkey" and "gypsy" by the blonde, fair, and plump daughters of the Adriatic. Her round face, sallow and insignificant, would never have attracted attention had it not been that her thick hair, cut short and brushed behind her ears, and her manner, which was serious and indifferent to external affairs, lent her a somewhat disagreeable oddity. Faces which do not please lose by degrees the faculty of pleasing. Their possessors care

no more for them than others do, and they take on a carelessness of expression which becomes more and more repulsive. Beauty watches and arranges and cherishes itself; it looks at itself and is eternally posing, so to speak, in an imaginary looking-glass. Ugliness forgets itself and takes no pains. Still, there are two kinds of ugliness. One, which suffers and protests unceasingly against the general contempt by habitual bad temper and envy, is the true, the only ugliness. The other, which is frank and careless, which accepts the situation, and neither shuns nor invites criticism, which wins the heart while it offends the eye, was Consuelo's ugliness. Kindly people who took an interest in her regretted at first that she was not pretty; then, thinking better of it, they said, as they took her head between their hands with that familiarity which one does not have with beauty, "Well, you look like a good creature!" and Consuelo was satisfied, although she knew quite well that the words meant "good, and nothing more."

Meanwhile, the young and handsome gentleman who had offered Consuelo the holy-water, stood by the basin until he had seen the last of the *scolari* go out. He looked at each one attentively, and when Clorinda, the most beautiful of them all, passed by him, he gave her holy-water in his hand, that he might have the pleasure of touching hers. The young girl blushed with pride, and as she went by, glanced at him with that look of mingled shame and boldness which is not the expression of either pride or modesty.

As soon as they had gone back into the convent, the gallant patrician returned to the nave, and going up to the professor, who was coming slowly down from the gallery, cried out, "By the body of Bacchus, tell me, my dear maestro, which of your pupils sang the *Salve Regina*?"

"And why do you wish to know, Count Zustiniani?" said the professor, as they left the church together.

"That I may congratulate you on her," answered the patrician. "For a long time I have attended not only your vespers but your rehearsals, for you know how *dilettante* I am of sacred music. But really, this is the first time I have ever heard Pergolese so perfectly sung; and as for the voice, it is the most beautiful that I have heard in my whole life."

"I believe you," replied the professor, as he absorbed a large pinch of snuff complacently and with dignity.

"Tell me the name of the heavenly creature who delighted me so much. In spite of your severity and your endless complaints, you have certainly made your school one of the best in Italy. Your choruses are good and your solos excellent, but the music that you perform is so great, so severe, that it is very rarely that these young girls can make us feel all its beauty."

"They cannot make you feel it," replied the professor, sadly, "because they do not feel it themselves. As far as fresh, extended, and brilliant voices are concerned, we have no lack of them, thank Heaven!

but musical organizations, alas, are rare and incomplete."

"You have one, at least, who is admirably gifted. The instrument is magnificent, the feeling perfect, and the skill remarkable. Tell me who it is."

"Did she not please you?" said the professor, avoiding the question.

"She touched my heart, she drew tears from me, and that by such simple methods and such natural effects that I could not understand it at first. Then I remembered what you have so often said to me in teaching me your divine art, dear master, and for the first time I understood how right you were."

"And what did I say to you?" asked the master, with a look of triumph.

"You told me that the great, the true, the beautiful in art is simplicity."

"But I told you also that there were brilliancy and ingenuity and cleverness, and that there was often cause to remark and admire these qualities."

"Undoubtedly. But you said that there was an abyss between these secondary qualities and the true manifestation of genius. Well, dear master, your cantatrice is on one side, and all the rest are on the other."

"It is true, and it is well put," remarked the professor, rubbing his hands.

"Her name?" repeated the count.

"Whose name?" said the sly professor.

"*Per Dio santo!* the name of the siren, or rather

of the archangel, to whom I have just been listening."

"And what do you want of her name, lord count?" asked the professor, severely.

"Why do you wish to make a secret of it, sir professor?"

"I will tell you the reason, if you will first tell me why you are so anxious to learn her name."

"Is it not a natural, and, indeed, an irresistible sentiment which impels us to know and to see the objects of our admiration?"

"Well, that is not your only motive. Allow me, dear count, to contradict you thus far. You are a great lover and a good judge of music, but you are, above all, owner of the San-Samuel Theatre. It is for your glory still more than for your profit that you gather the finest talents and the best voices in Italy into your theatre. You know that we give good lessons, — that we alone work seriously, and form great musicians. You have already stolen Corilla from us, and as she may any day be engaged by another theatre, you come prowling about the school to see if we have not formed another Corilla, whom you are ready to devour in turn. That is the real truth, count. Admit it frankly."

"Suppose it is true, dear maestro," replied the count, smiling, "what does it matter to you, and what harm is there in it?"

"I see a great deal of harm, count. You corrupt and ruin these poor creatures."

"What do you mean, most moral professor? When

did you constitute yourself the guardian of these fragile virtues? "

"You know very well what I mean, count, and that I care neither for their virtue nor for its fragility. But I do care for their talent, which you debase and degrade in your theatres by making them sing music which is vulgar and in bad taste. Is it not a shame to see Corilla, who was beginning to have a just comprehension of serious music, descend from sacred to profane, from prayer to jesting, from the altar to the stage, from the sublime to the ridiculous, from Allegri and Palestrina to Albinoni and the barber Apollini? "

"So you refuse to tell me the name of this girl, on whom I cannot have designs, for the matter of that, because I do not know whether she possesses the other qualities which a theatre demands? "

"I refuse absolutely."

"And you think that I shall not discover her? "

"Alas! you will discover her, if you have determined to. But I will do my best to prevent your taking her away from us."

"Well, maestro, you are already half conquered, for I have seen your mysterious divinity. I guessed which one it was."

"Indeed! " said the master, with a reserved and doubtful air. "Are you quite sure? "

"My eyes and my heart detected her, and I will draw you her portrait to convince you. She is tall — the tallest, I think, of all your pupils. She is white

as the snow of Frioul and rosy as the horizon on a fine morning. She has golden hair, blue eyes, and is pleasantly plump, and she wears a little ruby on her finger which burned my hand when it touched it like a spark of magic fire."

"Bravo!" cried Porpora, sarcastically. "I have nothing to conceal from you if that is the case, and the name of your beauty is Clorinda. Go on and make your seductive offers to her. Give her gold and diamonds and dresses. You can easily engage her for your troupe, and she may perhaps replace Corilla, for the public of your theatres nowadays prefers handsome shoulders to beautiful sounds, and bold eyes to a lofty intelligence."

"Am I mistaken then, dear master?" said the count, a little abashed. "Is Clorinda nothing but a commonplace beauty?"

"And if my siren, my divinity, my archangel, as it pleases you to call her, were anything but handsome?"

"If she were deformed, I should beg you never to point her out to me, for my illusion would be too cruelly destroyed. If she were only ugly, I could still adore her, but I should not engage her for the theatre, for talent without beauty is often only a misfortune and a torment to a woman. What are you looking at, maestro, and why do you stop?"

"This is the landing and I do not see any gondolas. But what are you looking at yourself, count?"

"I was looking to see if that boy sitting on the steps of the landing beside that ugly little girl is not

my protege Anzoleto, the most intelligent and the handsomest of our little plebeians. Look at him, dear maestro, for this concerns you as much as it does me. This child has the most beautiful tenor voice in Venice, and he has a passionate love for music, joined to extraordinary talent. I have wanted to speak to you about him for a long time, and beg of you to give him lessons. I intend him to be the support of my theatre, and I hope in a few years to be well repaid for my pains. Hola, Zoto! Come here, my child, and let me present you to the illustrious maestro Porpora."

Anzoleto drew his naked legs from the water, in which they had been carelessly hanging, while he was employed in making holes with a large needle in those pretty shells which the Venetians have poetically named *fiore di mare*. His only dress was a pair of very ragged trousers and a fine but tattered shirt, through which one could see his white arms, modelled like those of a little antique Bacchus. His was, indeed, the Greek beauty of a young faun, and his face displayed that singular mixture of dreamy melancholy and ironical indifference so common in the creations of pagan sculptors. His hair, curly but fine, of a light blonde, slightly reddened by the sun, fell in thick and short ringlets about his alabaster neck. All his features were incomparably perfect, but there was an over-bold expression in the glance of his ink-black eyes which did not please the professor. The child rose quickly at Zustiniani's voice, threw all his shells

in the lap of the little girl at his side, and while she, without interrupting her work, went on stringing them, and interspersing them with little golden pearls, he came up and kissed the count's hand, after the fashion of the country.

"Truly a handsome boy," said the professor, giving him a little tap on the cheek. "But his amusement seems a very childish one for his age, for he must be quite eighteen."

"Nearly nineteen, *sior professore*," replied Anzoletto, in the Venetian dialect. "But I am not playing with the shells, only helping Consuelo, who makes necklaces of them."

"Consuelo," said the master, drawing near his pupil with the count and Anzoletto, "I did not know that you cared for dress."

"Oh, they are not for me, sir," said Consuelo, half rising carefully, so as not to drop into the water the shells heaped in her apron. "I make them to sell so as to buy rice and maize."

"She is poor, and supports her mother," said Porpora. "If you and your mother are in trouble, Consuelo, you must come to me, but I forbid you to beg. Do you understand?"

"Oh, you need not forbid it, *sior professore*," replied Anzoletto, quickly. "She would not do it, and besides, I would prevent it."

"But you have nothing yourself," said the count.

"Nothing but your bounty, *illustrissimo signore*, but Consuelo and I share."

"She is a relative of yours?"

"No; Consuelo is a stranger."

"Consuelo? What a curious name!" said the count.

"A beautiful name, *illustrissimo*. It means consolation."

"Indeed! And you are friends, it seems."

"We are engaged, *signore*."

"Already? Just see these children, thinking of marriage at their age!"

"We are to be married on the day you sign my engagement at the San-Samuel Theatre, *illustrissimo*."

"At that rate, you will have a long time to wait."

"Oh, we can wait," said Consuelo, with the playful calm of innocence.

The count and the maestro amused themselves a few minutes longer with the frankness and the repartees of the young couple, and then, having made an appointment with Anzoleto for the next day, when the professor was to try his voice, they went away, leaving him to his serious occupation.

"What do you think of the little girl?" asked the master of Zustiniani.

"I had already seen her, only a few minutes ago, and I thought her ugly enough to prove the truth of the proverb that 'all women are handsome to a boy of eighteen.'"

"Very good! Now I can tell you that your heavenly singer, your mysterious beauty, was Consuelo."

"She! That hideous child! That thin, fallow grasshopper! Impossible, maestro!"

"She herself, my lord count. Would she not make a fascinating prima donna?"

The count stopped, turned about, looked at Consuelo once more, and cried, wringing his hands with a comical expression of despair, "Merciful Heaven! how could you commit such a mistake as to place the fire of genius in such a shocking head?"

"So you give up your guilty projects?"

"Most assuredly."

"You promise me?" added Porpora.

"Oh, I swear it!"

CHAPTER III.

BORN under the sky of Italy, brought up at hazard like a water-fowl, poor, orphaned, abandoned, yet happy in the present and confident in the future, Anzoleto, this handsome lad of nineteen, who spent all his days with little Consuelo on the streets of Venice in the most complete liberty, was not by any means indulging in his first love, as one might have supposed. He was no stranger to the easy conquests so common in Venice, and under a colder sky and with a nature less richly endowed, he might have been already worn out and corrupted. But his heart was still pure and his passions were held in check by his will. He had first chanced to meet the little Spaniard before the Madonettes, singing hymns, and he had sung with her the whole evening, merely for the pleasure of exercising his voice, with only the stars for an audience. Afterwards they had met on the sands of the Lido, gathering shell-fish, he to eat them, she to make necklaces and ornaments of them. Again they met in churches, where she went to pray to God with all her heart, and he to look at the handsome ladies with all his eyes. In all these meetings Consuelo had appeared so good, gentle, obliging, and gay that he had ended by making her his inseparable friend and companion, without exactly

knowing how or why. At this time Anzoleto understood only the sensual pleasure of love. He felt a friendship for Consuelo, and as he belonged to a country and a race in which passion is more common than attachment, he knew no other name to give his friendship than *love*. Consuelo accepted this figure of speech after making one objection. "If you call yourself my lover, do you mean that you wish to marry me?" Anzoleto replied, "Certainly, we will get married, if you like."

From that time the matter was settled. Anzoleto may have thought it a jest, although Consuelo took it quite seriously. It is certain that his young heart felt already those opposing sentiments and complicated emotions which disturb the lives of men who have become *blasé*. But, without understanding the charm which drew him to Consuelo, having as yet scarcely any feeling for the beautiful, and not knowing whether she was ugly or pretty, child enough to amuse himself with her at sports beneath his age, yet man enough to respect her fourteen years, he led with her in public, on the streets and canals of Venice, a life as happy, as pure, and as secluded as that of Paul and Virginia under the palms of the desert. Although they enjoyed a liberty more absolute and more dangerous, with no families, no tender and watchful mothers to train them in virtue, no faithful servant to seek them at nightfall and bring them back to the fold, no dog, even, to warn them of danger, their life was wholly innocent. They sailed the lagoons in boats without

oars or pilot, they wandered in the marshes without a guide, and with no concern for the rising tide. They sang before the shrines erected under vine branches at street corners without regard for the lateness of the hour and needing no other bed than the stones, still warm from the midday heat. They would stand before Polcinella's theatre and follow with passionate attention the adventures of the beautiful Corisande, the queen of marionettes, without remembering the absence of breakfast and the small likelihood of supper. They plunged into the wild sports of the carnival, Anzoleto with no disguise but his coat turned inside out, Consuelo with none but a bunch of old ribbons. They had sumptuous feasts on the balustrades of bridges or the steps of palaces, their only viands sea-fruit,¹ or raw fennel-stalks. They lived, in short, a free and happy life, without giving more dangerous caresses and feeling more tender sentiments than two innocent children of the same age and sex would have done. Days and years went by. Anzoleto had other loves, but Consuelo did not even know that there was any love different from that of which she was the object. She became a young girl, yet felt no need to show greater reserve to her lover. He saw her growing and becoming transformed without impatience or a wish for any change in their intimacy, which knew no cloud or scruple, no mystery or remorse.

¹ Different sorts of cheap shell-fish, of which the common people of Venice are very fond.

It was now four years since Professor Porpora and Count Zustiniani had mutually presented their little musicians to each other, and from that day the count had never thought of the young singer of sacred music. The professor had, for his part, quite forgotten the handsome Anzoletto, in whom he had found, on examination, none of the qualities which he required in his pupils. These were a serious and patient intelligence, in the first place, then a modesty which reached to the annihilation of the pupil before the master, and finally an entire absence of previous musical studies. "Never offer me a pupil," he used to say, "whose brain will not be like an empty page before my will, or like virgin wax, on which I may make the first impression. I have not time enough to waste a year in unlearning before I begin to teach. If you wish me to write on a slate, it must be clean, and not only that, it must be of good quality. If it is too hard, I cannot mark it. If it is too soft, I shall break it at the first stroke." In short, although he admitted the extraordinary powers of young Anzoletto, he announced to the count at the end of the first lesson, rather crossly and with ironical humility, that his method would be of no use to so advanced a pupil, and that "the first master he might meet with would be able to embarrass and retard the natural progress and the invincible development of this magnificent organization."

The count sent his protege to Professor Mellifiore, who led his pupil through roulades and cadenzas,

through trills and grupetti, up to the complete development of his brilliant powers. When Anzoleto was three-and-twenty he was considered by all those who heard him in the count's drawing-room to be competent to appear at the San-Samuel with success in the principal parts.

One evening all the *dilettante* nobility and all the artists of reputation in Venice were invited to be present at a final and decisive trial. Anzoleto appeared for the first time in a black coat and satin waistcoat, with his handsome hair powdered, and buckled shoes on his feet. He assumed a tranquil air and stepped on tiptoe to the clavecin where, under the light of a hundred candles and the eyes of two or three hundred people, he inflated his lungs and plunged, with his boldness, his ambition, and his chest C, into that dangerous career in which it is not a judge nor a jury but a whole public that stands ready to award glory or shame.

It is not worth while to ask whether Anzoleto felt any inward uneasiness. It was hardly apparent, at any rate ; and no sooner had his sharp eyes detected in the looks of the women that secret approval which is rarely refused to one so handsome ; no sooner had the amateurs, surprised at the power of his voice and the brilliancy of his vocalization, given utterance to a murmur of applause, than joy and hope filled his whole being. Until that time he had been commonly taught and listened to by common hearers, but he now realized for the first time in his life that he was not a

commonplace man, and, supported by a consciousness of triumph and the desire for more of it, he sang with remarkable spirit, originality, and energy. It is true that his taste was not always pure and his execution not always faultless, but he was able to redeem himself by feats of daring, by gleams of intelligence, and by bursts of enthusiasm. He missed the effects which the composer had designed, but he found others of which no one had ever thought, either the author who had composed, the professor who had interpreted, or the artists who had rendered the music. His boldness carried every one away. They forgave him a dozen faults for a single innovation, a dozen rebellions against method for a single flash of originality,—so true is it that in the matter of art the least spark of genius or the slightest aspiration towards new conquests exercises more fascination than all the resources of science within the limits of our knowledge.

No one, perhaps, considered the cause of this enthusiasm, but no one escaped from its effects. Corilla had opened the evening with an air which she had sung well and which had been warmly applauded, but the success of the young debutant so far exceeded her own that she was filled with rage. When Anzoletto, loaded with applause and caresses, came back to the clavecin near which she was seated, he leaned toward her and said, with mingled humility and boldness, "And you, queen of song and queen of beauty? Have you not even a look of encouragement for the unfortunate being who fears and adores you?"

The prima donna, surprised by so much audacity, looked closely at the handsome face at which she had scarcely deigned to glance before ; for what vain and triumphant woman would condescend to look at a poor and obscure lad? But at last she scanned his face, and was struck with its beauty. His fiery glance met hers, and she, fascinated and conquered, let fall on him a long look which set the zeal to his celebrity. During this memorable evening Anzoletto had conquered his public and disarmed his most dangerous enemy ; for the beautiful singer was not only queen on the boards, but also in the administration and in Count Zustiniani's study.

CHAPTER IV.

IN the midst of the unanimous and somewhat extravagant applause which the voice and the manner of the debutant had aroused, a single listener, seated on the edge of his chair, with his legs pressed together and his hands motionless on his knees, after the manner of an Egyptian god, remained silent as a sphynx and mysterious as a hiéroglyph. It was the learned professor and famous composer, Porpora. While his gallant colleague, Professor Melliflore, taking to himself all the honor of Anzoleto's success, was strutting among the women and bowing to the men to thank them for even a look, the master of sacred song sat with his eyes fixed on the ground, a frown on his brow, and his mouth closed, apparently absorbed in his own reflections. When the guests, who had been invited that evening to a great ball given by the dogaress, had gone away one by one, and only the most enthusiastic dilettanti remained, gathered about the clavecin with a few ladies and the principal artists, Zustiniani came up to the old master and said, —

“You are unjust to the modern composers, my dear professor, and your silence does not deceive me. You wish to close your ears to the very end against this secular music and this new style which delights us all, but your heart must have responded

in spite of yourself, and your ears have drunk in the poison."

"Come, *sior professore*," said the charming Corilla, resuming with her old master the teasing manner of the *scuola*, "you must do me one favor."

"Get thee behind me, wretched girl!" cried the professor, half laughing and resisting the caresses of his inconstant pupil. "What have we henceforth in common? I no longer know you. Carry your pretty smiles and your treacherous warblings elsewhere."

"Now he is becoming more amiable," said Corilla, taking the debutant by the arm with one hand while with the other she went on playing with the professor's large white cravat. "Come here, *Zoto*,¹ and kneel before the most learned master in Italy. Humble yourself, and disarm his severity. A word of praise from him, if you can get it, ought to be worth more in your eyes than all the triumphs of fame."

"You were very severe with me once, professor," said Anzoleto, bowing to him with mock modesty, "yet my only thought for four years has been to make you change your unfavorable opinion; and if I have not succeeded this evening, I do not know whether I shall have the courage to appear again before the public."

"Boy, boy!" said the professor, rising quickly and speaking with an earnestness and power which made him appear noble and dignified, instead of crooked

¹ Contraction of *Anzoleto*, which is the diminutive of *Angelo*, *Anzolo* in the Venetian dialect.

and ill-tempered, as he seemed ordinarily, "leave honeyed and lying words to women. Never condescend to flattery, even to your superiors, least of all to one whose opinion you inwardly despise. An hour ago you were in that corner, poor, unknown, and trembling. Your whole future hung upon a hair, — a sound of your throat, a failure of your powers, a caprice of your audience. A chance, an effort, an instant, have made you rich, celebrated, insolent. Your career is open before you ; you have only to go on in it as long as your powers sustain you. Therefore, listen ; for you are going to hear the truth for the first time, and perhaps for the last. You are in the wrong road. You sing badly, and you like bad music. You know nothing, and have never studied anything thoroughly. You have no attainments but practice and facility. You show passion in the wrong places, and you only know how to coo and warble like those pretty, coquettish creatures whose inability to sing is forgiven on account of their good looks. You do not know how to phrase, you pronounce badly, your accent is vulgar, and your style is false and common. Yet do not be discouraged. You have all these faults, but you have that with which to conquer them, for you have a quality which neither teaching nor labor can give you, and which neither bad advice nor bad example can take from you, — you have the sacred fire, you have genius ! The fire, alas ! will illumine nothing great ; the genius will remain barren ! For I see in your eyes, as I heard

in your singing, that you do not love art, that you have no faith in the great masters, that you have no respect for great creations. You love glory, — nothing but glory, — and for yourself alone. You might have — you might still — but no, it is too late ! Your career will be the flight of a meteor, like that of” —

And hurriedly clapping his hat on his head, the professor turned his back and went away without speaking to any one, absorbed in the inward development of his enigmatic sentence.

Although everybody laughed at the professor's eccentricities, his words made a painful impression and created a feeling of doubt and depression for a few moments. Anzoleto was the first to appear to forget them, although they had given rise to mingled emotions, — joy, pride, anger, and emulation, — which were to influence his whole future life. He appeared to be occupied only in making himself agreeable to Corilla, and he succeeded so well that she took a strong fancy for him at this first meeting. Count Zustiniani was not very jealous of her, and he had, perhaps, good reasons for not watching her too closely. He cared more for the glory and the success of his theatre than for anything else in the world. Not that he was avaricious, but he was a real fanatic in his worship of what are called the “fine arts.” This is, to my mind, an expression that exactly suits a certain vulgar sentiment which is altogether Italian, and consequently passionate without much discrimination. “Devotion to art” — a more modern expression, and one

which everybody did not use a hundred years ago — has a wholly different meaning from “a taste for the fine arts.” The count was, in point of fact, a “man of taste,” as they understood it at that day, an amateur and nothing more. But the chief business of his life was to satisfy this taste. He loved to be concerned about the public, and to have it concerned about himself. He liked to associate with artists, to set the fashions, to have every one talking of his theatre, his wealth, his amiability, and his magnificence. He was possessed, in a word, by the ruling passion of provincial celebrities, — ostentation. The easiest way to satisfy and amuse a whole city was to own and direct a theatre. He would have been still happier if he could have made the entire Republic sit down at his table. When strangers asked Porpora what sort of a man Count Zustiniani was, he was accustomed to reply, “He is a man who likes to entertain, and who serves music at his theatre just as he serves pheasants on his table.”

About one o'clock in the morning the party broke up.

“Anzolo,” said Corilla, who happened to be alone with him for a moment on the balcony, “where do you live?”

At this unexpected question, Anzoleto felt himself blush and turn pale almost simultaneously, for how could he acknowledge to this rich and brilliant beauty that he had practically neither bed nor board? Even that would have been better than to reveal the

wretched den in which he spent the nights which he did not pass, from choice or from necessity, under the blue canopy of heaven.

"Well, what is there so extraordinary in my question?" said Corilla, laughing at his embarrassment.

"I was thinking," said Anzoleto, with great presence of mind, "what palace of kings or fairies would be worthy of the proud mortal who could carry to it the memory of a look of love from Corilla."

"And what do you mean by that, flatterer?" she asked, flashing on him the most burning look that she could find in all her arsenal of charms.

"That I have not that happiness, but if I had, I should be too proud to live anywhere but between sea and sky, like the stars."

"Or the *cuccali*?" cried the cantatrice, with a peal of laughter. As the reader doubtless knows, gulls are birds of proverbial stupidity, and their simplicity is equivalent in the language of Venice to our expression "stupid as a goose."

"Laugh at me! despise me!" said Anzoleto. "I like even that better than for you not to think about me at all."

"Come, since you will not answer me except in metaphors, I will take you in my gondola at the risk of carrying you farther away from your house instead of nearer to it, and if I do serve you this ill turn, it will be your own fault."

"Was that the motive of your curiosity, signora?"

In that case my answer is short and clear: I live on the steps of your palace."

"Go and wait for me on the steps of this one," said Corilla, lowering her voice, "for Zustiniani might not like the indulgence with which I listen to your nonsense."

In the first flush of his vanity, Anzoleto slipped out, and sprang from the landing of the palace upon the bow of Corilla's gondola, counting the seconds by the beating of his heart. But before she appeared upon the steps of the palace, a number of reflections passed through the active and ambitious brain of the debutant. "Corilla is all-powerful," he said to himself, "but suppose I please her so much that I displease the count? And suppose I cause her to lose her influence over him?"

In his perplexity Anzoleto glanced at the stair by which he could still go back, and was thinking of making his escape, when torches flared under the portico, and the beautiful Corilla, wrapped in her ermine mantle, appeared upon the topmost step, surrounded by a group of gentlemen, each anxious to support her rounded elbow in the hollow of his hand, and thus hand her down the staircase, after the fashion of Venice.

"Well," said the prima-donna's gondolier to the distracted Anzoleto, "what are you doing there? Go into the gondola quickly if you have permission, or else run off by the bank, for the count is coming down with the signora."

Anzoletto hurried into the gondola without knowing what he was doing. He had lost his head. But he had hardly gone in when he began to picture to himself the count's amazement and indignation if he should come into the gondola with Corilla and find his upstart protege there. His agony was all the worse that it lasted more than five minutes. The signora had stopped half-way down the stairway. She was talking and laughing noisily with those who accompanied her, and discussing the method of giving a phrase, sang it loudly in several different ways. Her clear and ringing voice died away among the palaces and cupolas of the canal as the early crow of a cock dies away in the silence of the country.

Anzoletto, who could stand it no longer, was about to slip into the water through the window of the gondola which opened away from the landing. He had let down the glass, and already had one leg outside, when the second oarsman, the one at the stern, leaned over the little cabin towards him, and said in an undertone, —

“When she sings it means that you are to lie low, and wait without fear.”

“Evidently I do not know the customs,” said Anzoletto to himself, and he waited, but not without a lingering fear. Corilla amused herself by bringing the count to the very bow of her gondola, keeping him there, wishing him *felicissima notte*, until she was rowed into the stream. Then she came and sat down

by her new adorer as calmly and quietly as if she had run no risk whatever.

"Did you notice Corilla?" Zustiniani was meanwhile saying to Count Barberigo, "I would wager my head that she is not alone in her gondola."

"What gives you such an idea as that?" answered Barberigo.

"Because she teased me so much to go back with her to her palace."

"And aren't you jealous?"

"I was cured of that weakness long ago. I would give a great deal if our principal cantatrice were to fall seriously in love with some one who would make her prefer life in Venice to those dreams of travel with which she is constantly threatening me. I do not mind her little infidelities, and I could not replace her voice or her talent, or the fascination which she exercises over the San-Samuel public."

"I understand. But whom can she have with her to-night?"

The count and his friend went over the list of those to whom Corillo could have shown encouragement during the evening, and Anzoletto was absolutely the only one whose name was not suggested.

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE, a violent combat was raging in the breast of the happy lover whom the waves and the shadows were bearing away, distracted and embarrassed, by the side of the most famous beauty in Venice. Prudent and cunning as a true Venetian, Anzoleto had not looked forward to his debut for six years without learning all about the domineering and capricious woman who controlled all the intrigues of the theatre. He had every reason to believe that her fancy for him would not be long-lived, and he had not avoided this dangerous honor simply because, not thinking it so imminent, he had been taken off his guard. He had intended to make her tolerate him for his courtesy, and now she loved him for his youth, his beauty, and his new-born glory.

"Now," said Anzoleto to himself, with that rapidity of perception and conclusion which some marvelously organized brains possess, "it only remains for me to make myself feared, if I would escape the troubles and contempt which would assuredly follow my triumph. But how can such a poor devil as I make myself feared by the very queen of the infernal regions?" He quickly made up his mind, and began to display a distrust, jealousy, and bitter-

ness whose passionate coquetry astonished the prima donna. Their conversation was light, yet earnest.

"I know very well that you do not love me, and never will love me, and that is why I am sad and constrained in your presence," said Anzoletto.

"But suppose I did love you," said Corilla.

"Then," replied Anzoletto, "I should be in utter despair, because it would be my fate to fall from heaven into the pit, and lose you perhaps an hour after I had won you at the cost of all my future happiness."

"What makes you think me so inconstant?"

"My own lack of merit in the first place, and in the second, everything that I hear about you."

"Who is it that speaks so badly of me?"

"All the men, since they are all in love with you."

"Consequently, if I were foolish enough to fall in love with you and to tell you so, you would avoid me?"

"I do not know whether I should have the strength to keep away from you ; but if I had, it is certain that I would never see you again in my life."

"Well," said Corilla, "I have a great mind to make the experiment. Anzoletto, I really believe that I love you."

"And I do not believe it at all," he replied. "If I remain, it is only because I know that you are jesting, and at that game you cannot frighten me, still less pique me."

"I really believe that you wish to try wits with me."

"Why not? I am not very dangerous, since I have already given you a weapon with which to conquer me."

"What?"

"You have only to tell me in serious earnest what you just said in jest to freeze me with fright and put me to instant flight."

"You are a strange creature, and I see that you are not to be trifled with. You are one of those men who are not satisfied with breathing the perfume of the rose, but who wish to pluck and wear it. I should not have fancied you so bold or so self-willed, at your age."

"And do you despise me for it?"

"On the contrary, I like you the better. Good-night, Anzoleto, we will see each other again."

She held out her beautiful hand, which he kissed passionately. "I came out of it rather well," he thought, as he hurried away under the gallery which runs beside the canaletto.

Hopeless of being able to get into the hovel in which he usually dwelt, he thought of lying down on the first door-step he came to, and there enjoying the angelic repose which youth and poverty alone know. But for the first time in his life he could not find a stone clean enough to lie down on. Although the pavement of Venice is cleaner than any other in the world, such a bed was far from befitting a black coat of the finest cloth and the latest fashion. And then the proprieties! The very boatmen who would step

carefully over the stairs without touching the rags of the young plebeian, would insult him in his sleep, and perhaps purposely soil the livery of his parasitical luxury thus displayed at their feet. What would they think of a man who slept in the open air, wearing silk stockings and fine linen, and with lace at his wrists and his throat? Anzoleto began to wish himself back in his brown-and-red cloak, well worn and faded, but still half an inch thick, and proof against the unwholesome mist which rises in the morning from the waters of Venice. It was in the latter part of February, and although at that season of the year the sun is brilliant and warm in that climate, the nights are still very cold. He thought of taking refuge in one of the gondolas moored against the bank, but they were all locked. At last he found one whose door was open; but as he went in he stumbled against the barcarolle who was sleeping there, and fell over him. "By the devil's body!" cried a loud, hoarse voice from the bottom of this cavern, "who are you, and what do you want?"

"Is that you, Zanetto?" said Anzoleto, recognizing the voice of the gondolier, who was usually good-natured enough with him; "let me lie down by you and take a nap in the shelter of your cabin."

"Who are you?" asked Zanetto.

"Anzoleto. Don't you know me?"

"No, by Satan! You wear clothes that Anzoleto could not have, unless he had stolen them. Get out, get out! If he were the doge himself, I would not

take a man in my boat who had fine clothes to walk about in and no place to sleep."

"Thus far," thought Anzoletto, "the perils and annoyances to which I have been exposed through Count Zustiniani's protection and favors have been greater than the advantages which they have procured me. It is time that my fortune should begin to correspond with my success, and I long to have some sequins in my pocket that I may play properly the role that has been thrust upon me."

He wandered about the streets in a very bad humor, not daring to stop for fear of checking the perspiration which anger and fatigue had induced. "If only I do not catch a sore throat!" he thought. "To-morrow the count will wish to show off his young protege before some stupid aristocrat who, if I display the slightest hoarseness, after a night without rest or sleep or shelter, will assert that I have no voice; and the count, who knows better, will say, 'Ah, if you had only heard him yesterday!' — 'Then he is unequal?' another will say; 'perhaps his health is not good.' — 'Perhaps he tired himself yesterday,' a third will say. 'He is very young to sing several days in succession. You would be wise to wait before introducing him on the boards until he is riper and more robust.' And the count will cry, 'The devil! If he becomes hoarse after singing a couple of airs, he will not do for me at all.' Then, to be sure that I have strength and good health, they will make me sing exercises every day until I am out of breath, and will break my voice

to find out if my lungs are sound. The devil take the protection of great lords ! Ah, why can I not be free, and strong in my fame, the admiration of the public and the rivalry of the theatres, sing in their drawing-rooms as a favor, and treat with them as one power with another ! ”

Talking thus to himself, Anzoleto came into one of those little squares which are called *corti* at Venice, although they are not courts at all, but rather what is known in French as a “*cité*.” But these so-called courts are far from being regular, elegant, and well cared for, like our modern “squares.” They are rather little, dark enclosures, sometimes forming a cul-de-sac, sometimes affording passage from one quarter to another, but little travelled, and in neighborhoods inhabited by those of small means and low condition, generally by the common people, by workmen, or by laundresses, who hang their linen on lines stretched across the street, — an inconvenience which is borne by wayfarers with great good nature, since their right of way is oftener from toleration than legal. Woe to the unfortunate artist whose study-windows open on these secluded enclosures, the home of vulgar life which crops up with its rustic customs, noisy and somewhat uncleanly, in the heart of Venice, only a few steps from broad canals and sumptuous palaces ! Woe to him if silence is necessary for his work, since from dawn till dark the noise of children, fowls, and dogs playing and fighting, the endless chatter of women from door-steps to door-steps, and the songs of work-

men in their shops would not leave him a moment's rest! Yet happy is he if an *improvisatore* does not come and howl his sonnets and his dithyrambs until he has collected a penny from every window, or when Brighella does not plant her booth in the middle of the yard, patiently repeating her dialogue with the *avvocato, il tedesco e il diavolo*, until she has vainly exhausted her fruitless eloquence before a mob of tattered children, — happy spectators who have no scruples about listening and looking, though they have not a farthing in their pockets.

But at night, when all is silence, and only the peaceful moon lights the pavements, this collection of houses of all periods, thrown together without symmetry and without pretension, marked by strong shadows, full of mystery in their recesses and of instinctive grace in their oddity, displays a disorder which is infinitely picturesque. All becomes beautiful under the rays of the moon. The smallest architectural effect grows and takes a new character. The tiniest vine-clad balcony puts on all the airs of a Spanish romance, and fills the imagination with startling adventures. The limpid sky, in which are seen, beyond this sombre and angular frame, the pale cupolas of distant buildings, leads one to endless reveries.

It was in the Corte Minelli, near the church of San Fantin, that Anzoletto found himself as the clocks were striking two in the morning. A secret instinct had led his steps to the abode of a person whose name or face had not once come into his mind since

sunset. He had hardly stepped into the court, when he heard a soft voice calling him very low by the last syllables of his name, and raising his head, he saw a faint figure on one of the most wretched terraces in the enclosure. A moment afterwards the door of the building opened, and Consuelo, dressed in a cotton gown and wrapped in an old silk mantle which had once belonged to her mother, came and held out one hand to him, while she placed a finger on her lips to caution him to silence. They went on tiptoe, feeling their way up the old and broken winding stair which led to the roof; and when they were seated on the terrace, they began one of those long whisperings broken by kisses, which one hears nightly on the house-tops, like mysterious breezes, or colloquies of spirits of the air, who flit in couples through the mist among the odd chimneys which deck with their red turbans all the houses of Venice.

“What, my poor Consuelo,” said Anzoleto, “have you waited for me all this time?”

“Did you not say that you would come to give me an account of your evening? Well, tell me how you sang, — whether you pleased them and they applauded you, and whether your engagement is to be signed.”

“And you, dear Consuelo,” said Anzoleto, suddenly filled with remorse at seeing the confidence and the sweetness of the poor child, “tell me whether you have not been impatient at my long absence, if you are not tired of waiting for me, whether you have not been very cold here on the terrace, whether you have

thought of supper, whether you are angry at me for coming so late, whether you have been uneasy or blamed me?"

"Not one of them all," said Consuelo, frankly throwing her arms about his neck; "if I got impatient, it was not your fault; if I was tired and cold, I no longer feel it, now that you have come. I have forgotten whether I had supper or not. I did not blame you; why should I? I was not uneasy; what was there to be uneasy at? And angry with you? Never!"

"You are an angel!" said Anzoleto, kissing her. "Ah, my consolation, how false and hard the hearts of others are!"

"Alas, what has happened to you! What have they done to the *son of my soul*?" said Consuelo, mingling with her pretty Venetian dialect the bold and passionate metaphors of her native language.

Anzoleto told her everything that had happened, even his flirtation with Corilla, and especially her advances to him. Only, he told things in his own way, repeating only what could not pain Consuelo, which, since he had been faithful to her in fact and intention, was *almost* the whole truth. But there is a hundredth part of the truth on which no judicial inquiry has ever thrown light, which no client has ever confessed to his lawyer, which no verdict has ever punished, because in the few facts or intentions which remain mysterious is the cause, the motive, the end, the secret, in short, of those great cases which are always so badly argued

and so badly judged, no matter what the zeal of the advocates or the impartiality of the judges.

To return to Anzoletto ; it is not necessary to tell what peccadillos he passed over in silence, what ardent emotions in the presence of the public he explained to suit himself, what longings, stifled in the gondola, he forgot to mention. I am inclined to think, indeed, that he did not speak of the gondola at all, and that he represented his flattery of the cantatrice as an adroit mockery by which he avoided, without offending her, the dangerous advances with which she had overwhelmed him. Why, since he neither could nor would tell the whole truth, — that is to say, the strength of the temptations which his prudence and common sense had overcome, — why, do you say, dear reader, did the young scamp run the risk at all of awakening Consuelo's jealousy? Do you ask it, madam? Tell me if you yourself are not accustomed to tell the lover — I mean the husband — of your choice, all the homage which has been paid you by others, all the flatterers that you have laughed at, all the rivals that you have sacrificed, not only before marriage, but afterwards, the morning after every ball, yesterday, to-day, even? Come, madam, if you are beautiful, as I like to fancy you, you would have done precisely as Anzoletto did, — not to enhance your own value, not to make a jealous soul suffer, not to make still prouder a heart already proud enough because of your preference, but because it is pleasant to have some one to whom you can tell these things, while

you seem to be accomplishing a duty in confessing them. Only, madam, you only confess *almost everything*. There is a tiny something of which you never speak, — the look, the smile, which called the impertinent declaration from the presumptuous creature of whom you complain. This smile, this look, this nothing is exactly the gondola of which Anzoleto, who was happy at the chance of going over in his memory all the intoxication of the evening, forgot to tell Consuelo. Fortunately for the little Spaniard, she did not as yet know the meaning of jealousy, — that dark, bitter sentiment which comes only to souls which have suffered deeply, — for, up to that time, Consuelo's love had been as happy as it was pure. The only circumstance which made a deep impression on her was the flattering yet severe prophecy delivered by her respected master, Porpora, concerning the future of her adored Anzoleto. She made the latter repeat the expressions of which the master had made use, and, after he had given them word for word, she thought for a long time and remained silent.

“Consuelina,” said Anzoleto, without much noticing her revery, “the air is extremely cool; are you not afraid of catching cold? Remember that our future depends even more on your voice than on mine.”

“I never catch cold; but you are so thinly dressed in your fine clothes! Here, wrap yourself up in my cloak.”

“What should I do with that poor little piece of

taffeta, all full of holes? I should like much better to take shelter for half an hour in your room."

"I am willing, only we must not talk, for the neighbors might hear us, and they would find fault with us. They are not ill-natured. They see our love-making without annoying me much, because they know very well that you never come to my room at night. You had much better go home and sleep."

"Impossible! The house will not be open till dawn, and I have still three hours to shiver. See, my teeth are chattering."

"If that is the case, come," said Consuelo, rising. "I will put you in my room and come back on the terrace, so that if any one is watching us, they will see that I give no cause for scandal."

She took him to her room; it was a large chamber, much out of repair, in which flowers frescoed on the walls reappeared here and there from under a second coat of paint, more vulgar and almost as much defaced as the first. A large, square, wooden bed, with a sea-weed mattress and a cotton spread, very clean, but patched in a thousand places with pieces of all colors; a straw chair; a little table; a very old guitar; and a filagree crucifix,—the only riches which her mother had left her; a little spinet and a great pile of old, worm-eaten music which Porpora had had the generosity to send her; such was the furniture of the young artist, the daughter of a poor Bohemian, the pupil of a great master, and the betrothed of a handsome adventurer.

As there was only a single chair, and as the table was covered with music, there was but one seat for Anzoleto—the bed; and he sat down on it without ceremony.

He was hardly seated on the edge when fatigue overcame him, and he let his head fall on a large cushion of wool which served as a pillow, saying,—

“Oh, my dear little wife, I would give all the rest of the years that I have to live for an hour’s sleep, and all the treasures of the universe for the end of this spread over my legs. I have never been so cold as in these wretched clothes, and the discomfort of walking has given me a chill and a fever.”

Consuelo hesitated an instant. An orphan and alone in the world at the age of eighteen, she was responsible for her actions to no one but God. Believing in Anzoleto’s word as in Holy Writ, she did not think herself threatened with his disgust or his abandonment of her if she yielded to all his wishes. But a sentiment of modesty which Anzoleto had never corrupted in her made her think his request a little coarse. She went up to him and touched his hand. It was, indeed, very cold, and Anzoleto made her touch his brow, which was burning.

“You are ill!” she cried, seized with an anxiety which silenced all other considerations. “Well, sleep an hour on the bed.”

Anzoleto did not have to be told twice.

“Good as God himself!” he murmured, stretching himself on the sea-weed mattress.

Consuelo wrapped him up in the spread, and taking some poor garments from a corner, laid them on his feet.

"Anzoleto," she said, in a low voice, as she performed these motherly offices, "this bed on which you are about to sleep is the one in which I slept with my mother during the last years of her life; the one in which I saw her die, on which I wrapped her in her winding-sheet, and on which she lay as I watched over her body with prayers and tears until the bark of the dead came and took her away from me forever. I wish to tell you now what she made me promise in her last moments. 'Consuelo,' she said, 'swear to me upon the Christ that Anzoleto shall not take my place in this bed before you have been married to him by a priest.'"

"And you swore?"

"I swore; but in letting you sleep here for the first time, I do not give you my mother's place, but my own."

"And you, poor child! will you not sleep at all?" said Anzoleto, half rising with a violent effort. "Ah! I am a brute, and I will go and sleep in the street."

"No," said Consuelo, pushing him back on the pillow with tender violence. "You are ill and I am not. My mother, who died a good Catholic, and who is in heaven, still watches over us. She knows that you have kept the promise you made her not to abandon me. She knows, too, that our love has been as pure since her death as it was during her life. She

sees that now I am thinking and doing no evil. May her soul rest in the Lord ! ”

Here Consuelo made the sign of the cross. Anzoletto was already asleep.

“ I will go and say my beads up on the terrace, that you may not have a fever,” added Consuelo, as she went off.

“ Good as God ! ” repeated Anzoletto, faintly, and he did not even perceive that his betrothed was leaving him alone. She went on the roof to tell her beads, and then came back to make sure that he was not worse, and seeing him sleeping peacefully, looked long in meditation at his handsome, pale face, lighted up by the moon.

Then, not wishing to fall asleep herself, and remembering that the excitement of the evening had caused her to neglect her work, she lit her lamp, sat down before her little table, and wrote an exercise in composition which Maestro Porpora had given out for the following day.

CHAPTER VI.

COUNT ZUSTINIANI, in spite of his philosophy, was not so insensible to Corilla's insolent caprices as he tried to appear. He could not help suffering from the ingratitude with which she repaid his generosity, and although it was in the worst possible taste at that period (in Venice as well as at Paris) to show the slightest jealousy, his Italian pride rebelled against the contemptible and ridiculous part which she compelled him to play.

Therefore, on the evening of Anzoleto's success at the Zustiniani palace, the count, after jesting with Barberigo about the prima-donna's infidelities, took his cloak and his sword as soon as he saw the rooms empty and the lights extinguished, and hurried to the palace in which Corilla lived to satisfy his doubts.

Although he made sure that she was alone, he still felt uneasy, and began a conversation in an undertone with the boatman, who was putting the gondola in its shed. A few sequins induced the man to talk, and the count soon learned that he had not been mistaken in supposing that Corilla had had a companion in the gondola. But who this companion was he could not find out, for the gondolier did not know. Although he had seen Anzoleto a hundred times about the theatre and the Zustiniani palace, he had not recognized

him in the dark, with his black coat and powdered hair.

This impenetrable mystery completed the count's ill-humor. He could not sleep, and before the hour when Porpora began his lessons at the conservatory, he took his way to the Scuola di Mendicanti, and entered the room in which the young pupils were to assemble.

The count's position in relation to the learned musician had greatly changed. Zustiniani was no longer Porpora's musical antagonist, but his associate, and in some sense his chief. He had made large gifts to the establishment which the master directed, and, out of gratitude, he had been given supreme control. Consequently, the two friends got on together as amicably as could be expected, considering Porpora's intolerance concerning the music then in fashion, — an intolerance which he was obliged to modify out of regard for the encouragement which the count gave to serious works. Moreover, Zustiniani had produced one of the master's operas at San-Samuel.

"My dear master," said the count, taking Porpora aside, "you really must make up your mind not only to allow me to take one of your pupils for the theatre, but you must point out to me the one who is best able to replace Corilla. Our cantatrice is worn out; she is losing her voice, her caprices ruin us, and the public will soon be tired of her. It is really time for us to think of finding a successor."

"I have not got what you need," replied the professor, curtly.

"Really, master, I hope you are not falling back into your old temper. After such labor and sacrifices on my part to assist you in your musical work, will you positively refuse me any kindness when I ask your help and advice for my own?"

"I no longer have that right, count," replied the professor, "and what I have told you is the truth, spoken by a friend who has every desire to oblige you. I have not in my school a single girl capable of taking Corilla's place. I do not set too high a price on her, but, while I declare that her talent has no solid value in my eyes, I am compelled to admit that she possesses a tact, an experience, a cleverness, and an influence over the senses of the public which it takes years to acquire, and which no debutante can possess for a long while."

"That is true," said the count, "but, after all, we formed Corilla, we saw her begin, and we made the public accept her. Her beauty gained three parts of her success, and you have as pretty girls in your school as she was. You will not deny that, maestro. Come, confess that nobody could be more beautiful than Clorinda."

"Nor more affected and simpering and insupportable! It is true that the public may think her grimaces charming; but then she sings false and has neither soul nor intelligence. It is true that the public has no ears, either; but then she has not even memory or cleverness, and could not save herself from a fiasco by the charlatanism which serves so many people."

As he said this, Porpora shot an involuntary glance at Anzoletto, who, as the count's favorite, and under pretence of having to speak to him, had gained admittance into the room, and was standing a short way off, listening to the conversation.

"No matter," said the count, without noticing the master's spiteful little thrust, "I will not give up the idea. It is a long time since I heard Clorinda. Send for her, and five or six others with her, the prettiest there are. Here, Anzoletto," he added, laughing, "you are well dressed enough to put on the grave look of a young professor. Go into the garden and tell the most striking of these young beauties that we are waiting for them here."

Anzoletto obeyed; but either from a spirit of mischief, or because he had a good reason of his own, he brought back the ugliest, so that if Jean-Jacques had been there, he might well have said, "Sofia was one-eyed, Catrina was lame."

They took Anzoletto's jest good-naturedly, and after laughing a little in their sleeves, sent the girls back to send in such of their comrades as were designated by Porpora. A charming group soon came, with the handsome Clorinda as the central figure.

"What superb hair!" whispered the count to Porpora as she passed before him.

"There is a great deal more on that head than in it," said the rough old musician, without condescending to lower his voice.

After an hour of trials, the count, who could en-

ture it no longer, gave up in despair, and went away with graceful thanks to the young ladies, but saying in a low voice to Porpora, "These parrots will never do."

"If your illustrious excellency will allow me to say a word about what is troubling him"—murmured Anzoletto in the count's ear, as they went down the stairs.

"Speak," answered the count; "do you know such a marvel as we are seeking?"

"Yes, excellency."

"In what sea do you expect to find this pearl?"

"At the bottom of the class, where the wil professor hides her when you review your feminine battalion."

"Is there a diamond in the school whose brilliancy my eyes have never noticed? If Porpora has played such a trick"—

"Excellency, the diamond of which I speak does not belong to the school. It is a poor girl who only comes to sing in the chorus when they need her, and to whom the professor gives private lessons from charity, and still more from his love of art."

"Then this poor girl must have extraordinary ability, for the professor is not easily pleased, and he is not wasteful of either time or labor. Have I ever heard her without knowing it?"

"Your excellency heard her once, very long ago, when she was only a child. Now she is grown up, strong, studious, learned as the professor, and able to

make the public hiss Corilla if she were to sing three bars beside her on the stage."

"Does she never appear in public? Does Porpora never have her sing motets at vespers?"

"Formerly he used to love to have her sing at church, excellency, but since the pupils, from jealousy and revenge, threatened to drive her out of the gallery if she came there with them"—

"Then she leads an immoral life?"

"O Dio! excellency, she is a virgin, as pure as the gates of heaven. But she is poor and of low birth,—like me, your excellency, whom you nevertheless design to raise by your goodness,—and these vile harpies threatened that they would complain to you of the breach of the rules which the professor committed by introducing into the class a pupil who did not belong to it."

"Where can I hear this marvel?"

"You have only to order Porpora to have her sing for you, excellency. You can then judge of the beauty of her voice and the extent of her talent."

"You seem so confident that I should like to hear her. You say that I once heard her, long ago. I cannot recollect"—

"It was at a rehearsal in the Church of the Mendicanti. She sang Pergolese's 'Salve Regina.'"

"Oh, I remember!" cried the count. "Her voice and accent and intelligence were admirable."

"And yet she was only fourteen years old, my lord—a mere child."

"Yes, but — I seem to recollect that she was not pretty."

"Not pretty, excellency!" said Anzoleto, taken aback.

"Was not her name — ? Yes, she was a Spaniard, with a strange name."

"Consuelo, excellency."

"Precisely, and you were to be married to each other, and the professor and I had a good laugh over your love affair. Consuelo! It is certainly she, Porpora's favorite, a very intelligent girl, but very ugly."

"Very ugly!" echoed Anzoleto, aghast.

"Of course, my child. Are you still in love with her?"

"She is my friend, illustrissimo."

"When we say friend, we mean either sister or mistress. Which of the two?"

"Sister, excellency."

"In that case I can tell you what I think without hurting your feelings. Your idea is preposterous. We need an angel of beauty to replace Corilla, and I recollect well now that your Consuelo is more than ugly; she is frightful."

The count was joined just then by one of his friends, who went off with him, and he left Anzoleto in consternation, mechanically repeating, "more than ugly; frightful!"

CHAPTER VII.

It may seem strange to the reader, but it is true that Anzoleto had never formed any opinion concerning the beauty or ugliness of Consuelo. Her life in Venice had been so isolated and secluded that no one had ever thought of noticing whether the form which clothed so much intelligence and goodness was handsome or plain. Porpora, who had lost all perception of everything but art, saw in her only the artist. Her neighbors in the Corte Minelli had watched her innocent love affair with Anzoleto without being much shocked, for people in Venice are not exacting about such matters. It is true that they occasionally prophesied that she would in the end be unhappy with this young fellow, who had neither trade nor occupation, and advised her to marry instead some honest and quiet workman. But as she replied that, being without family and position herself, Anzoleto suited her perfectly, and as not a day had passed for six years without their being seen together, never trying to hide themselves and never quarrelling, people had at last become accustomed to their free yet indissoluble union. No neighbor had ever thought of making love to Anzoleto's friend. Was it because of her supposed engagement, or because of her poverty? Or was it

rather because her person had never attracted one of them? The last hypothesis is the most probable.

As every one knows, little girls of from twelve to fourteen are generally thin and ugly, and without harmony of feature, proportion, or movement. At about fifteen they are made over again, if we may say so, and she who but a little while ago was frightful to look at, reappears after this short transformation if not handsome, at least agreeable. It has even been noticed that beauty in a child does not generally promise well for good looks in a young girl.

Consuelo, having improved with adolescence, as is commonly the case, had ceased to be called ugly, and the truth is that she was so no longer. Only, as she was neither a dauphiness nor an infanta, she had no courtiers about her to proclaim the fact that the royal offspring was visibly growing in beauty; and as she had no family to be tenderly concerned for her future, nobody took the trouble to say to Anzoletto, "Your betrothed will never make you blush for her looks."

Although Anzoletto had heard her called ugly at an age when such criticisms have neither good sense nor value, as he had never heard the subject mentioned since then, he had forgotten all about it. His vanity had taken another direction. All his dreams were of the theatre and of fame, and he had no time to think of displaying his conquests. Besides, the curiosity in love which most young men feel had been satisfied in him. As I have already said, there was nothing left

for him to learn at eighteen. At two-and-twenty, he was half blase, and then, as at eighteen, his love for Consuelo was as tranquil, in spite of a few chaste kisses, given without passion and returned without shame, as it had been earlier.

That there may be no undue surprise at this calmness and virtue on the part of a young man who was not remarkable for either in his general life, it may be remarked that the great liberty in which our young people lived at the beginning of this story had, in the course of time, become modified and restrained little by little. Consuelo was about sixteen, and still led rather a vagabond life, leaving the conservatory all alone to practise her lesson and eat her rice on the steps of the Piazzetto with Anzoletto, when her mother, worn out with fatigue, gave up singing in the cafes in the evening, with a guitar in her hand and a bowl for alms before her. The poor creature withdrew into one of the most wretched garrets in the Corte Minelli to die by inches on a miserable pallet. Then the good Consuelo, unwilling ever to leave her, changed the whole course of her life. Except during the time occupied by her lesson, she worked at her sewing or her counterpoint by the bedside of this imperious and despairing mother, who had cruelly maltreated her in her childhood, and who now gave her the frightful spectacle of a death without courage and without virtue. Consuelo's filial piety and devotion never wavered for an instant. The joys of childhood, liberty, a wandering life, and even love

were all sacrificed without complaint and without hesitation.

Anzoleto murmured bitterly ; and seeing that his reproaches were useless, resolved to amuse himself and forget her, but it was impossible. He was not a hard worker, like Consuelo. He took quickly and carelessly the poor lessons which his teacher, to earn the salary promised by Count Zustiniani, gave equally quickly and carelessly. This was a very fortunate thing for Anzoleto, because the prodigality of nature quickly repaired the effects of wasted time and the bad teaching which he received, but it also resulted in long hours of idleness, during which he sadly missed the bright and faithful companionship of Consuelo. He tried to addict himself to the passions of his age and his class, frequenting wine-shops and gambling away the little gifts which Count Zustiniani made him from time to time. This life pleased him for two or three weeks, and then he perceived that his comfort, his health, and his voice had deteriorated perceptibly, that the " *far niente* " and dissipation were not at all the same thing, and that dissipation was not his element. Preserved from evil passions by a deep-seated self-love, he sought solitude and forced himself to study ; but the solitude seemed unbearable to him. He then realized that Consuelo was as necessary to his talent as to his happiness. Studious and persevering, living in music as a bird lives in the air or a fish in the sea, overcoming difficulties without attaching more importance to the victory than a child would have done,

but irresistibly impelled to combat obstacles and to penetrate the mysteries of art by the same instinct which causes seeds to push through the earth and reach the light of day, Consuelo had one of those rare and happy organizations which, by a necessity of their nature, find in labor both pleasure and a true repose. To such temperaments idleness would be a fatigue, if idleness were possible for them. But they do not know what it means, and even when apparently idle they are still working ; they do not dream, but think. You say, dear reader, that you have known but few of these extraordinary organizations? I answer that I myself have known but one.

Consuelo was always at work, but she made her work a pleasure. She would persist for hours in overcoming, either by free and capricious practice, or by musical reading, difficulties which would have rebuffed Anzoleto if he had been left to himself. Without any set design and without any thought of rivalry, she would force him to follow her, to support her, to understand and to answer her, sometimes during her bursts of childish laughter, sometimes when carried away by that poetical and creative enthusiasm which is peculiar to the temperaments of the common people in Spain and Italy. During the years that he had been absorbing Consuelo's genius, drinking it in at its source without understanding it, and appropriating it without being aware of it, Anzoleto, who was held back in other respects by his laziness, had become in music a strange mixture of knowledge and ignorance,

of inspiration and frivolity, of power and awkwardness, of boldness and weakness, which had plunged Porpora into a labyrinth of ideas and conjectures.

The master did not know the secret of all these riches, borrowed from Consuelo, for after he had once scolded her severely on account of her intimacy with this good-for-nothing, he never again saw them together. Consuelo, who wished to remain in his good graces, had taken care never to be seen by him when she was with Anzoletto; and if she saw him in the street when they were together, she would dart into a gondola or hide behind a column.

These precautions continued when Consuelo became a nurse, and Anzoletto, unable to bear her absence, and feeling that he was losing life, hope, and inspiration, came back to share her quiet life and bear with her the dying woman's bitterness and ill-temper. A few months before the end, the poor woman lost all strength, and, conquered by the devotion of her daughter, felt her heart open to softer emotions. She grew accustomed to receiving the attentions of Anzoletto, who, in spite of his unfitness for such a part, contrived to show a sort of playful zeal and amiability towards her weakness and suffering. His devotion finally won her heart, and in her last moments she made him and Consuelo swear never to separate from each other. Anzoletto promised, and even he felt in that solemn hour a sort of serious tenderness which he had never known before. The dying woman made this promise the easier for him by saying, "Whether

she is your friend, your sister, your mistress, or your wife, do not abandon her, for she knows no one and has listened to no one but you." Then, believing that she was taking a wise and wholesome precaution, and without much thinking whether it was practicable or not, she made her daughter take the oath of which we already know, and which Consuelo had sworn without foreseeing the obstacles which might spring up from Anzoletto's independent and irreligious character.

When she became an orphan, Consuelo continued to work with the needle for her present needs, and to study music that she might share in Anzoletto's future. During the two years that she had lived alone in her garret, he had continued to see her every day without feeling any passion for her, and without being able to feel it for other women, so far did the sweetness of her friendship and the pleasure of living in her intimacy appear preferable to anything else.

Without realizing the extraordinary talent of his companion, he had acquired sufficient knowledge and discrimination to be aware that she had greater cultivation and richer gifts than any cantatrice at San-Samuel, were it Corilla herself. Therefore, to his habitual affection there was joined the hope and almost the certainty of an association of interests which would in course of time render their life profitable and brilliant. Consuelo was not much accustomed to think of the future. Foresight was not one of her marked mental characteristics. She would have worked at her music in any event, because of her

love of it ; and the community of interest which the practice of this art created between her and her friend meant nothing more to her than an association of taste and happiness. Therefore Anzoletto had, without consulting her, conceived the hope of hastening the fulfilment of their dreams ; and while Zustiniani was considering a way of replacing Corilla, the ambitious tenor, guessing the condition of his patron's mind with remarkable sagacity, had improvised the proposition which he had just made.

But Consuelo's ugliness — this strange, unexpected obstacle, which was insuperable if the count was not mistaken — filled him with doubt and consternation. He therefore took his way to the Corte Minelli, stopping every few steps to recall his friend's face under a new light, and to repeat to himself, with a point of interrogation after each word, "Not pretty? Very ugly? Frightful?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHY are you looking at me so?" said Consuelo, seeing him come in and gaze at her with a strange expression, without saying a word. "One would say that you had never seen me before."

"It is true, Consuelo," he replied, "I never have seen you!"

"Are you crazy? I don't know what you mean!"

"Good heavens! I should think not," cried Anzoleto; "I have a great black spot on my brain through which I cannot see you at all."

"Gracious! Are you ill?"

"No, dear child, be easy, and let us try to get at the truth. Tell me, Consuelo, do you think me handsome?"

"Certainly, since I love you."

"And if you did not love me, what would you think?"

"How do I know?"

"When you look at other men, do you know whether they are handsome or ugly?"

"Yes, but I think you more handsome than the handsomest of them."

"Is it because I am so, or because you love me?"

"A little of both, I think. But every one says that

you are handsome, and you know it very well yourself. What difference does it make?"

"I wish to know whether you would love me even if I were frightful?"

"Very likely I should not notice it."

"Do you think that one can love an ugly person?"

"Why not, since you love me?"

"Then you are ugly, Consuelo? Tell me truly, are you ugly?"

"I have always been told so. Do not you see it?"

"No, really, I do not."

"In that case I consider myself handsome enough, and am quite satisfied."

"Do you know, Consuelo, that now, as you look at me with such a good, such a natural, such a loving expression, it seems to me that you are handsomer than Corilla. But what I wish to know is, whether it is the truth or the effect of an illusion. I know your expression — I know that it is frank and pleases me, that when I am irritated it calms me, when I am sad it cheers me, when I am depressed it encourages me. But I do not know your face, Consuelo; I cannot tell whether it is ugly."

"But again I ask you, what difference does it make?"

"I must know! Tell me, could a handsome man love an ugly woman?"

"You loved my poor mother, who was but a ghost. And I loved her so dearly!"

"Did you think her ugly?"

“No, did you?”

“I never thought about it at all. But to love really, Consuelo—for I do really love you, do I not? I cannot do without you, I cannot stay away from you. That must be love; what do you think?”

“Could it be anything else?”

“It might be friendship.”

“Yes, it might be friendship.”

Consuelo stopped in surprise, and looked attentively at Anzoletto, who, having fallen into a mournful reverie, was asking himself, absolutely for the first time, whether the feeling which he had for Consuelo was love or friendship; whether the freedom from passion and the chastity which he had preserved toward her were the result of respect or indifference. For the first time he looked at this young girl with the eyes of a young man, examining with an analytic spirit which was somewhat painful the brow, the eyes, the figure, and all the details which he had never grasped save as a sort of ideal whole, seen but dimly. For the first time Consuelo felt embarrassed by the gaze of her friend. She blushed, her heart beat violently, and she turned away her eyes, unable to bear his look. At last, as he continued to maintain a silence which she did not dare to break, her heart was filled with unspeakable anguish, great tears rolled down her cheeks, and hiding her face in her hands, she said, “Oh, I see what it is! You have come to tell me that you will no longer have me for a friend.”

“No, no, I did not say that; I do not say it!” cried

Anzoleto, frightened by the tears which he had for the first time caused to flow ; and quickly recalled to his brotherly feelings, he put his arms about Consuelo. But as her face was turned away, instead of her cool and calm cheek, he kissed a burning shoulder, half hidden by a fichu of coarse black lace.

When the fire of passion is suddenly lighted in a vigorous organization which has preserved the chastity of childhood through the entire development of youth, the shock is violent and almost painful.

"I do not know what is the matter with me," said Consuelo, as she released herself from the arms of her friend with a feeling of fear which she had never yet felt ; "but I feel very badly, — as though I were about to die."

"Do not die !" said Anzoleto, following her and supporting her in his arms. "You are beautiful, Consuelo ! I am sure that you are beautiful !"

Indeed, Consuelo was beautiful at that moment ; and although Anzoleto was not certain from an artistic standpoint, he could not help saying it, because he felt it deeply in his heart.

"But what has made you anxious to-day about my beauty ?" said Consuelo, pale, and suddenly prostrated.

"Would you not like to be beautiful ?"

"Yes, for you."

"And for others ?"

"I do not care."

"But if it were one of the conditions of our future success ?"

Then, seeing how anxious he had made her, Anzoletto told Consuelo frankly his whole conversation with the count ; and when he repeated the unflattering expressions which Zustiniani had employed in speaking of her, Consuelo gave way to a great burst of laughter, and finished wiping her eyes.

“ Well ! ” said Anzoletto, surprised at such an utter absence of vanity, “ is that all you care about it ? Ah, I see, Consuelo ! you are a little coquette, and know that you are not ugly.”

“ Listen,” she replied with a smile ; “ since you take all this nonsense seriously, I must relieve your mind a little. I have never been a coquette ; for not being beautiful, I do not care to be ridiculous. But as to being ugly, I am no longer that.”

“ Have you really been told so ? Who has told you, Consuelo ? ”

“ My mother, in the first place. She was never worried about my ugliness. I have often heard her say that that would pass away, and that she had been even uglier as a child. Yet many people who knew her have told me that at twenty she was the handsomest girl in Burgos. And you remember that when any one would look at her in the cafes where she used to sing, they would say, ‘ That woman must have been handsome.’ You see, my poor boy, that is the way with beauty when one is poor ; it lasts but a moment. One is not yet handsome, and then, soon, is handsome no longer. Who knows but I, too, may be handsome, if I do not have to work too hard

and can sleep enough, and do not suffer too much from hunger."

"Consuelo, we will never part. I shall soon be rich, and you shall want nothing. Then you can be handsome at your ease."

"Very well. May Heaven send it!"

"But that settles nothing for the present; and the question is, whether the count will think you handsome enough to appear at the theatre."

"Wretched count! If he is only not too hard to please!"

"In the first place, you are not ugly."

"No, I am not ugly. Not long ago I heard the glass-blower who lives opposite say to his wife, 'Do you know that Consuelo is not bad looking? She has a good figure, and when she smiles she brightens one's heart. When she sings she is positively pretty.'"

"And what did the wife reply?"

"The wife said, 'What business is that of yours, imbecile? Attend to your work! Do you think a married man ought to be looking at young girls?'"

"Did she seem angry?"

"Very angry."

"That is a good sign. She felt that her husband was not mistaken. What next?"

"Next, the Countess Moncenigo, who gives me work, and who has always taken an interest in me, said to Dr. Ancillo, who was with her when I came in, 'Doctor, see how this child has grown, and how fair and well-shaped she has become!'"

"What did the doctor say?"

"He said, 'It is true, madam, by Bacchus! I should never have known her. She has that phlegmatic constitution which becomes fairer as it acquires stoutness. She will be a handsome girl, you will see.'"

"And next?"

"Next, the superior of Santa Chiara, who orders embroidery for the altars of me, said to one of the sisters, 'Come here and see if what I told you is not true. Consuelo looks like our St. Cecilia. When I say my prayers before the picture, I cannot help thinking of her, and then I pray for her, that she may not do wrong, and may never sing except in church.'"

"And what did the sister reply?"

"The sister replied, 'It is true, my mother; it is quite true.' Then I went into their church and looked at the St. Cecilia, which is by a great master and is beautiful, very beautiful."

"Does it look like you?"

"A little."

"And you never told me that!"

"I never thought of it."

"So you are beautiful, dear Consuelo?"

"I do not think that, but I am not so ugly as they used to say. It is certain that they never say so any more; but that may be because they think that now it would hurt my feelings."

"Come, Consuelo, look at me. In the first place, you have the most beautiful eyes in the world."

"But my mouth is large," said Consuelo, laughing, and taking down the little cracked bit of glass which served her as a mirror.

"No, it is not small; but what beautiful teeth you have!" said Anzoletto. "They are real pearls, and when you laugh you show them all."

"Then you must say something to make me laugh when we appear before the count."

"You have superb hair, Consuelo."

"Yes, I am quite sure of that. Would you like to see it?"

She took out the pins and let fall a torrent of black hair which reached to the floor, and on which the sunlight glittered as on ice.

"Your chest is broad, your waist good, and your shoulders — ah! magnificent, Consuelo! Why do you hide them? I only wish to see what you will have to show the public."

"My foot is small enough," said Consuelo, avoiding the subject, and showing a real Andalusian foot, a beauty almost unknown in Venice.

"Your hand is charming, too," said Anzoletto, kissing for the first time a hand which until then he had always shaken warmly, like that of a comrade. "Let me see your arms."

"You have seen them a hundred times," she said, drawing off her mittens.

"No, I have never seen them," said Anzoletto, who began to be curiously agitated by this innocent yet dangerous examination.

He became silent again, devouring with his eyes the young girl, who seemed to him handsomer each time that he looked at her.

It may be that he had not been altogether blind until then, for Consuelo had, for the first time perhaps, thrown off that look of indifference which is only endurable when accompanied by perfect regularity of features. At that time, when she was still agitated by her past emotion, simple and trusting once more, but preserving a faint embarrassment which was the result, not of coquetry, but of conscious modesty, her complexion was of a transparent clearness, and in her eyes shone a pure and serene light which certainly caused her to resemble the St. Cecilia of the nuns of Santa Chiara.

Unable to bear her embarrassment any longer, Consuelo suddenly rose, and resuming her playful manner with an effort, began to walk up and down the room with tragic gesticulations, and singing operatic phrases in a somewhat exaggerated manner, as if she were on the stage.

"Why, it is magnificent!" cried Anzoleto, delighted to find her capable of a charlatanism which she had never before displayed.

"It is not magnificent," said Consuelo, sitting down again, "and I hope you do not mean it."

"It would be superb on the stage. I assure you that it would not be exaggerated. Corilla would die of envy, for it is quite as striking as what she does when they applaud her most furiously."

"My dear Anzoletto," said Consuelo, "I should not care to have Corilla die for envy of clap-trap, and if the public applauded me for mimicking her I should not care to appear before it again."

"You could do it better still?"

"I hope so, or I should have nothing to do with it."

"Well, how would you do?"

"I don't know."

"Try!"

"No, for all this is a dream, and we must not make so many fine projects before it is decided whether I am ugly or not. Perhaps we are all wrong, and as the count says, Consuelo is frightful."

This last possibility gave Anzoletto the strength to go away.

CHAPTER IX.

AT this period of his life, concerning which his biographers know very little, one of the best composers of Italy, and the greatest singing-teacher of the eighteenth century, the pupil of Scarlatti, the master of Hasse, Farinelli, Cafarelli, La Mingotti, Salambini, Hubert (called Porporino), La Gabrielli, La Molteni ; in a word, the father of the most celebrated school of singing of his time, Nicholas Porpora, was living obscurely in Venice, in a condition bordering on indigence and despair. Yet he had formerly directed the conservatory of the Ospedaletto in that same city, and that period of his life had been brilliant. He had written and brought out there his best operas, his finest cantatas, and his principal pieces of church music. Summoned to Vienna in 1728, he had there gained, after a struggle, the favor of the emperor, Charles VI. A favorite also at the court of Saxony, Porpora afterwards went to London, where he had the glory of sustaining a rivalry for eight or ten years with Handel, the master of masters, whose star shone dimly at this time. But Handel's genius won the day in the end, and Porpora, wounded in his pride and broken in his fortunes, had returned to Venice to assume quietly, and not without some difficulty, the direction of another conservatory. He still wrote operas,

but he had great trouble in getting them produced, and the latest, although written in Venice, was presented in London, where it had no success. His genius had received severe wounds, which glory and good fortune might have cured, but the ingratitude of Hasse, Farinelli, and Cafarelli, who more and more deserted him, completely broke his heart, soured his character, and imbibtered his old age. He died at Naples in his eightieth year, poor and unhappy.

At the time when Count Zustiniani, foreseeing and almost desiring Corilla's defection, was endeavoring to find some one to take her place, Porpora was subject to violent attacks of ill-humor, which were not wholly without justification. For though the music of Jomelli, Lotti, Carissimi, Gasparini and other excellent masters was liked and sung at Venice, the public also enjoyed the "buffa" music of Cocchi, Buini, Salvator Apolloni, and other composers, whose vulgar and fluent style suited the taste of vulgar minds. The operas of Hasse could not please his justly incensed master. Therefore, the venerable but unhappy Porpora, closing his ears and his heart against the works of modern musicians, sought to crush them under the glory and the prestige of the older composers. His condemnation extended even to the graceful compositions of Galuppi, and the dainty fancies of Chiozzetto, the popular composer of Venice. He would hear of nobody but Padre Martini, Durante, Monteverde, and Palestrina. Therefore, when Count Zustiniani made his first proposi-

tions concerning Consuelo, Porpora received them coldly and sadly. He desired her happiness and glory, for he was too experienced a teacher not to understand her ability and her deserts ; but at the idea of the profanation of this talent, so pure and so richly nurtured with the sacred manna of the great masters, he bowed his head with a look of dismay, and said to the count, —

“Yes, take her, this spotless soul, this stainless mind ! Cast her to the dogs, throw her to the beasts of the field ! It is the fate of genius in our day.”

The professor’s distress, which was real, though absurd, gave the count an idea of the pupil’s merit, from the value which so severe a master set on it.

“Really, my dear maestro,” he cried, “is Consuelo so extraordinary, so divine a creature ?”

“You shall hear her,” said Porpora, and then repeated, “it is her fate !”

However, the count succeeded in raising the master’s drooping spirits by holding out the hope of a reform in the choice of operas for his theatre. He promised to exclude trashy compositions as soon as he had gotten rid of Corilla, on whom he threw the blame of their acceptance and their success. He even insinuated adroitly that he would be very chary of Hasse, and declared that if Porpora would write an opera for Consuelo, the day on which the pupil crowned the master with a double glory, by giving his ideas in the manner which befitted them, would be one of

lyric triumph for the San-Samuel, and the happiest moment of the count's life.

Porpora was fairly won over, and began to wish secretly for the debut of his pupil, as much as he had previously dreaded it, in the fear that she would bring additional success to the works of his rival. But when the count expressed his doubts as to Consuelo's beauty, he refused to allow him to hear her in private and without notice.

"I do not say," he answered to the count's questions and his pressing, "that she is a beauty. But a little dress and preparation are absolutely necessary for a girl poorly dressed and timid, as a child of the people, who has never been the object of the least attention, must needs be in the presence of a nobleman and a judge like yourself. Besides, Consuelo is one of those women whose beauty is extraordinarily enhanced by the expression of genius. You must see her and hear her at the same time. Let me do as I like. If you are not satisfied, you can leave her to me, and I will make a good nun of her, and she will perpetuate the glory of my school by training pupils in it."

This was, indeed, the future which Porpora had destined for Consuelo.

When he saw his pupil, he told her that she was to be heard and judged by the count. But as she innocently expressed to him her fear of being thought ugly, he made her believe that she would not be seen, and that she was to sing in the grated organ-gallery,

while the count was in the church. He advised her, however, to be properly dressed, because she would have to be presented to the count afterwards; and, although he was poor, the noble master gave her some money for this purpose. Consuelo, distressed and excited, concerned about her looks for the first time, hastened to put both her toilet and her voice in order. She tried the latter, and finding it so fresh, so strong and so flexible, said to Anzoleto, who was listening to her with rapture, "Alas! why does a singer need more than to know how to sing?"

CHAPTER X.

ON the afternoon before the important day, Anzoletto found Consuelo's door bolted, and, after waiting nearly a quarter of an hour on the stairs, he was at last admitted, to find his friend in her new dress, which she had put on to see how it pleased him. She wore a pretty muslin gown, with large figured flowers, and a lace fichu, and her hair was powdered. She was so changed that Anzoletto stood silent for a few moments, uncertain whether she had gained or lost by the transformation. The doubt which Consuelo read in his eyes was a cruel blow to her.

"Ah!" she cried, "I see that I do not please you in this dress. Who could think me endurable if he who loves me finds no pleasure in looking at me?"

"Just wait a little," said Anzoletto. "In the first place, I am surprised at the beauty of your figure in these long stays, and at the air of distinction which the lace gives you. The heavy folds of your gown are marvellously becoming. But I miss your black hair, — at least, I think I do. But that is the costume of the common people, and to-morrow you must be a lady."

"Why must I be a lady? As for me, I hate this powder, which fades and ages even the most beautiful women. All these furbelows look like borrowed plu-

mage. I do not like myself in this dress at all, and I see that you are of the same opinion. Do you know, I went to rehearsal this morning and saw Clorinda, who was trying on a new gown, too. She was so smart and fine and handsome, that I am afraid to appear beside her before the count. She is really happy, for one does not have to look at her twice to know that she is beautiful."

"Don't worry yourself. The count has seen her, but he has heard her, too."

"Did she sing badly?"

"As she always sings."

"Ah, my friend, these rivalries spoil one's heart! A little while ago, if Clorinda, who is a good girl, in spite of her vanity, had made a fiasco before the judge, I should have felt almost as sorry and ashamed as she herself. And now I find myself glad of it! To struggle, to envy, to try to ruin each other, and all for a man whom one does not love, whom one does not even know! I feel dreadfully sad, dear love, and I am as much frightened at the idea of succeeding as at that of failing. It seems as if our happiness was drawing to an end, and that to-morrow, after the trial, no matter what the result of it may be, I shall come back to this poor room wholly changed from what I have been heretofore."

Two great tears rolled down Consuelo's cheeks.

"Are you going to cry now?" cried Anzoletto. "What are you thinking about! You will dim your eyes and swell your lids. Your eyes, Consuelo!

don't spoil your eyes, which are the handsomest thing you have ! ”

“ Or the least ugly,” she said, wiping away her tears. “ Ah, well, when one gives one's self to the world, one has no longer the right even to weep ! ”

Her friend did his best to console her, but she was bitterly sad all the rest of the day ; and in the evening, when she was once more alone, she carefully brushed out the powder, uncurled her black hair and coiled it up, and tried on a simple black dress, which was still fresh, and which she usually wore on Sundays. When she saw herself in the glass, looking as she ordinarily did, she recovered confidence. Then she prayed fervently, thought of her mother, grew sad again, and finally cried herself to sleep. When Anzoleto came the next day to take her to church, he found her at her spinet, in her usual Sunday dress, trying over the solo which she was to sing.

“ What ! ” he cried, “ not dressed yet, and your hair not done ! It is almost time ! What are you thinking about, Consuelo ? ”

“ Dear friend,” she answered resolutely, “ I am all dressed, my hair is arranged, and I am quite easy. I intend to go as I am. These fine dresses do not suit me, and you like my black hair better than powder. Besides, this waist does not interfere with my breathing. Do not try to persuade me ; I have made up my mind. I asked God to inspire me, and my mother to watch over me. God has inspired me to be modest and simple. My mother came to me in a dream and said,

‘Just try to sing well ; God will do the rest.’ Then I saw her take my fine dress, my laces, and my ribbons, and fold them away in a wardrobe, and afterwards she placed my black gown and my white-muslin mantilla on the chair beside my bed. As soon as I waked up, I laid away the dress as I had seen her do in my dream, and I put on the black gown and the mantilla. So I am all ready. I feel braver since I have given up trying to please by means which I do not know how to use. Listen to my voice ; everything depends on that.”

She sang a phrase.

“Good heavens ! we are ruined !” cried Anzoleto. “Your voice has lost its brilliancy and your eyes are red. You must have cried last night, Consuelo. This is a fine state of affairs ! I tell you that we are ruined, and your idea of dressing in mourning on a festival is absurd. It is unlucky, and besides it is unbecoming. Quick, quick ! put on your handsome dress again, while I go and buy you some rouge. You are pale as a ghost.”

A rather sharp discussion sprang up between them. Anzoleto was somewhat brutal. The poor girl felt her heart grow sad again, and her tears flowed afresh. Anzoleto grew still more irritated at this, and in the midst of the argument the fatal hour struck, the quarter before two o’clock, leaving them just time to hurry to the church and get there all out of breath. Anzoleto uttered an energetic oath. Consuelo, paler and more trembling than the morning star which is

mirrored in the water of the lagoons, looked at herself once more in her little broken glass, and then turning around, she threw herself impetuously into Anzoletto's arms.

"Oh, my love," she cried, "do not scold me, do not curse me! Kiss me hard, rather, to drive this dreadful paleness from my cheeks. May your kiss be like the fire of the altar on the lips of Isaiah, and may God forgive us for doubting his goodness!"

She quickly threw her mantilla over her head, took her books, and dragging away her appalled lover, hurried to the Mendicanti, where a crowd was already assembled to listen to Porpora's fine music. Anzoletto, more dead than alive, went to join the count, who had told him to meet him in his gallery, and Consuelo went up into the organ-loft, where the chorus was already in line of battle, with the maestro at his desk. Consuelo did not know that the count's gallery was so situated that he could see much less into the church than into the organ-loft, that he already had his eyes fixed on her, and that he was not losing one of her gestures.

But he could not yet distinguish her features, for she knelt down as soon as she came in, hid her face in her hands, and began to pray earnestly. "My God," she said, from the bottom of her heart, "Thou knowest that I do not seek to rise above my rivals to humble them. Thou knowest that it is not to abandon the love of Thee and to wander in the paths of vice that I am about to give myself to the world and

to secular art. Thou knowest that pride does not fill my heart, and that it is only that I may live with him whom my mother permitted me to love, that I may never be separated from him, and that I may insure his welfare and happiness, that I ask Thee to support me, and to glorify my voice and my thought while I sing Thy praises."

When the first chord of the orchestra called Consuelo to her place, she rose slowly. Her mantilla fell to her shoulders, and at last her face was visible to the anxious and impatient spectators in the neighboring gallery. But what a marvellous transformation had taken place in this young girl, who but a moment ago was so pale and cast down, crushed by fatigue and fear! A heavenly radiance seemed to float about her broad brow, and a soft languor still overspread the sweet and noble lines of her serene and generous face. Her look revealed none of those small passions which seek and covet a trivial success. There was in her whole appearance something solemn, mysterious, and exalted, which compelled respect and love.

"Courage, my daughter!" said Porpora, in a low voice. "You are about to sing the music of a great master, and that master is here to listen to you."

"Is it Marcello?" said Consuelo, seeing the old man lay Marcello's psalms on his desk.

"Yes, Marcello. Sing as you always do, with nothing more or less, and all will be well."

Marcello, then in the latest year of his life, had in

fact come to pay a last visit to Venice, his fatherland, which was proud of him, whether as a composer, a writer, or a magistrate. He had been full of courtesy towards Porpora, who had begged him to listen to his pupils, and who had, moreover, arranged a surprise for him by having Consuelo, who knew it perfectly, sing his magnificent psalm, "I cieli immensi narrano." No selection could have been more appropriate to the species of religious exaltation which then filled the soul of this noble girl. As soon as the first words of this broad and spirited air appeared before her eyes, she felt herself transported into another world. She forgot Count Zustiniani, the curious looks of her rivals, and even Anzoletto, and thought only of God and of Marcello, who seemed to take the place of an interpreter between herself and that splendid heaven whose glory she was about to sing. What nobler theme could there be, indeed, or what grander idea?

I cieli immensi narrano
Del grande Iddio la gloria;
Il firmamento lucido
All universo annunzia
Quanto sieno mirabili
Della sua destra le opere.

A divine fire rose to her cheeks and a sacred flame flashed from her eyes as she filled the building with that unequalled voice and that victorious accent, pure and truly grandiose, which can spring only from a great intelligence united to a great heart. After

Marcello had listened to a few bars, a torrent of delicious tears flowed from his eyes. The count, unable to master his emotion, cried out, —

“Sangue di Christo! This woman is beautiful! She is St. Cecilia, St. Theresa, St. Consuelo! She is poetry, music, and faith personified!”

As for Anzoleto, who had risen, and who could only support himself on his shaking knees by clinging to the grating of the gallery, he fell back on his seat choking, ready to faint, and drunk with joy and pride.

It required all their respect for the holy place to keep the numerous dilettanti and the crowd which filled the church from breaking into frantic applause, as if they had been in a theatre. The count had not the patience to wait for the end of the service before going into the organ-loft to express his enthusiasm to Porpora and Consuelo. The latter was obliged, during the chanting of the officiating clergy, to go into the count's gallery to receive Marcello's thanks and praises. She found him still under the influence of a powerful emotion.

“My child,” he said, in a broken voice, “receive the thanks and the blessing of a dying man. You have made me forget in an instant years of mortal agony. It seems as though a miracle had been worked in me, and this incessant, frightful pain had disappeared forever at the sound of your voice. If the angels above sing as you do, I long to quit the earth to go and enjoy an eternity of the pleasure

which you have just revealed to me. Therefore may you be blessed, my child, and may your happiness in this world be equal to your merits. I have heard Faustina, Romanina, Cuzzoni, — all the great singers of the world ; but not one of them is fit to be mentioned in the same breath with you. It has been reserved for you to give the world to hear that which it has never heard, and to feel that which man has never felt."

Consuelo, overwhelmed and almost crushed by this magnificent praise, bent her knee nearly to the ground without being able to utter a word, and raised to her lips the livid hand of the dying man. But as she rose, she glanced at Anzoletto with a look which seemed to say, "Yet you, ungrateful fellow, never guessed what was in me !"

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the rest of the service, Consuelo displayed an energy and a richness of powers which forestalled all the objections which Count Zustiniani might yet have made. She led, sustained, and gave life to the choruses, taking each part in turn, showing in this way the prodigious range and the various qualities of her voice, as well as the inexhaustible power of her lungs, or, to speak more properly, the perfection of her method ; for those who know how to sing never tire themselves, and Consuelo sang with as little effort and labor as others show in breathing. Her clear and full tone could be heard above the hundred voices of her companions, not because she screamed like those singers who have neither brains nor breath, but because the quality was of irreproachable purity and her delivery faultlessly distinct. Besides that, she felt and understood the finest shades of meaning in the music which she was interpreting. She alone, in short, was a musician and a master in the midst of this herd of vulgar minds, fresh voices, and weak wills. Therefore it was instinctively and without ostentation that she exerted her power ; and as long as the singing lasted she exercised an authority which the others felt to be necessary. But after the service was over, they were impatient and angry with her for

it, and one who, a moment before, feeling herself weaken, had almost implored her help by a look, now calmly appropriated to herself all the praise which was given to Porpora's school as a body. The master smiled at this praise without saying anything, but he looked at Consuelo, and Anzoletto understood the look right well.

After the benediction, the chorus-singers partook of a rich collation which the count had served in one of the parlors of the convent. A grating separated two large tables, in the shape of a half-moon, and an opening, the size of an enormous pasty, was made in the centre of the grating, through which the count gracefully served the principal nuns and the pupils. The latter, dressed like Beguines, came in turn by dozens to take the empty seats within the cloister. The superior, who sat next the grating, was thus on the right of the count, who was in the outer apartment. But on Zustiniani's left there was a vacant place. Marcello, Porpora, the curate of the parish, the principal priests who had just officiated, and a few patrician dilettanti and lay managers of the school, and finally, the handsome Anzoletto, in his black coat and with a sword at his side, filled up the count's table. Ordinarily, on such occasions, the young singers were very animated. The pleasure of eating, that of talking to men, and the desire to be admired, or, at any rate, to attract attention, gave them plenty of life and vivacity. But that day the luncheon was dreary and constrained. The count's project had

become known (how could there be any secret in a convent without its leaking out in one way or another?), and each of the young girls secretly flattered herself that she was to be presented by Porpora as Corilla's successor. The master had even encouraged some of them in their illusions, either to induce them to sing better before Marcello, or to avenge himself, by their future disappointment, for all that they had inflicted on him in their lessons. It is certain that Clorinda, who was only an out-door pupil of the school, had made an elaborate toilet, and expected to take her place on the count's left hand. But when she saw that tatterdemalion, Consuelo, with her plain black dress and her quiet manner, that ugly creature whom she affected to despise, proclaimed the only musician and the only beauty in the school, and seated between the count and Marcello, she became ugly with anger, — ugly as Consuelo had never been, and as Venus herself would be if she were filled with low and wicked feelings. Anzoleto looked at her attentively and, triumphing in his victory, sat down by her and overwhelmed her with ironical attentions which she had not the wit to understand, and which quickly comforted her. She thought that she was being revenged on her rival by attracting the attention of her betrothed, and she spared no pains to intoxicate him with her charms. But she was too shallow, and Consuelo's lover too clever, for this unequal contest not to cover her with ridicule.

Count Zustiniani was surprised to find, when he

talked to Consuelo, that the tact, good sense, and charm of her conversation were as remarkable as the talent and power which she had shown in church. Although she was absolutely free from coquetry, there were a playful frankness and a confiding simplicity in her manner which inspired sudden and irresistible sympathy. When luncheon was over, the count invited her to come and enjoy the cool of the evening with his friends in his gondola. Marcello was excused because of his bad health ; but Porpora, Count Barberigo, and several other patricians accepted the invitation, and Anzoleto was allowed to go along. Consuelo ; who felt a little embarrassed at being alone with so many men, begged the count in an undertone to ask Clorinda ; and Zustiniani, who did not understand Anzoleto's devotion to the poor girl, was not sorry to see him turn his attentions to another than his betrothed. The noble count, thanks to the frivolity of his character, his good looks, his wealth, and his theatre, as well as to the loose morals of his age and country, was not without a good share of conceit. Heated with Greek wine and musical enthusiasm, and impatient to be revenged on his faithless Corilla, he thought it the most natural thing in the world to make love to Consuelo. He sat down beside her in the gondola, after placing every one so that Clorinda and Anzoleto were at the opposite end of the boat, and began to look at his new victim in a highly significant fashion. The good Consuelo, however, did not understand it in the least. Her frankness and her honesty ✓

would never have permitted her to suppose that the protector of her friend could have such evil designs, and her native modesty, which had not been in the least affected by her brilliant triumph, would have forbidden her even to believe such designs possible. She continued to revere in her heart the gentleman who had adopted her as well as Anzoleto, and innocently gave herself up to enjoying the excursion without suspecting any ulterior motive for it.

Such calmness and ingenuousness surprised the count, and he could not make out whether it was the willing submission of an unresisting heart or the stupidity of absolute innocence. Yet in Italy a girl of eighteen must know, or, I should say, a hundred years ago must have known, a good deal, especially with such a friend as Anzoleto. Everything, therefore, appeared to favor the count's hopes. Yet every time that he took his protegee's hand, every time that he stretched out his arm to put it about her waist, an indefinable fear made him pause, and he was filled with a feeling of doubt, and almost of respect, which he could not understand.

Barberigo also found Consuelo very fascinating, and he would gladly have established pretensions like those of the count, had he not thought it more delicate on his part not to interfere with his friend's designs. "Honor to whom honor is due," he thought, seeing Zustiniani's eyes floating in an atmosphere of voluptuous intoxication; "my turn will come later." Meanwhile, as young Barberigo was not much in the habit

of gazing at the stars when he was in the company of ladies, he asked himself what right Anzoletto had to monopolize the blonde Clorinda, and sitting down beside her, tried to make the tenor understand that he would be better employed in rowing the boat than in making love to the young girl. Anzoletto was not well bred enough, in spite of his marvellous acuteness, to understand a hint, and, moreover, his pride towards patricians bordered on insolence. He hated them cordially, and his servility to them was merely a mask which concealed his inward contempt. Barberigo, seeing that Anzoletto was amusing himself by annoying him, devised a cruel vengeance.

"By heaven!" said he aloud to Clorinda, "see what a success your friend Consuelo is having! I wonder where she will stop to-day? Not satisfied with creating a sensation through the whole town by the beauty of her singing, she is turning the poor count's head with the fire of her glances. If he is not mad already, he soon will be, and then there will be an end to Madam Corilla."

"Oh, you need not worry," said Clorinda, with a sly look. "Consuelo is in love with Anzoletto here. She is engaged to him. They have been devoted to each other for I don't know how many years."

"Yes, but the devotion of any number of years may be forgotten in the twinkling of an eye, especially when that eye happens to be Zustiniani's. Do you not agree with me, lovely Clorinda?"

Anzoletto could not bear this raillery very long.

His heart became filled with all sorts of unpleasant ideas. Until then, he had never suspected or dreaded anything of the kind. He had given way blindly to the joy of seeing his friend triumph, and it had been as much to conceal his raptures as to enjoy a refinement of vanity that he had been amusing himself for a couple of hours in making sport of the victim of this intoxicating day.

After jesting a little with Barberigo, he pretended to take an interest in the musical discussion which Porpora was carrying on in the middle of the boat with the other guests. He left the place which he no longer cared to keep, and slipped in the dark up to the bow. At the first attempt that he made to break into the count's tete-a-tete with his betrothed, he quickly perceived that Zustiniani did not welcome the interruption, for he answered him coldly, and even shortly. At last, after several idle questions which were badly received, he was advised to go and listen to the deep and learned remarks which the great Porpora was making on the subject of counterpoint.

"The great Porpora is not my master," replied Anzoleto, in a jesting tone, under which he concealed his inward rage as well as he was able. "He is Consuelo's, and, if it might please your dear and well-beloved lordship," he added very low, bending towards the count with an insinuating and caressing manner, "that my poor Consuelo should take no other lessons than those of her old professor" —

"Dear and well-beloved Zoto," said the count, in

an equally caressing, but profoundly suggestive, tone, "let me whisper a word to you ;" and, leaning over to him, he added, " your betrothed must have received from you lessons in virtue which would make her invulnerable. But if I had a fancy to give her others, I should have a right to try it for at least one evening."

Anzoleto grew cold from head to foot.

" Will your gracious excellency deign to explain ? " he asked, in a choking voice.

" It can be quickly done, my gracious friend," replied the count, in a clear tone : " gondola for gondola."

Anzoleto was terrified to see that the count knew about his interview with Corilla. That mad and reckless creature had boasted of it to the count in a furious quarrel which they had recently had. The culprit tried in vain to appear not to understand.

" Go and listen to what Porpora is saying about the principles of the Venetian school," went on the count. " You can come back and tell us all about it ; it interests me greatly."

" So I see, excellency," said Anzoleto, who was furious, and fast losing control of himself. \

" Well, are you not going ? " said the innocent Consuelo, surprised at his hesitation. " I will go myself, count. You shall see how obedient I am," and before the count could stop her, she had bounded lightly over the thwart which separated her from the old master, and was sitting by his side.

The count, seeing that he had not made much headway with her, thought it best to dissemble.

"Anzoleto," he said, smiling, and pulling his protege's ear rather hard, "my vengeance shall stop here, though it has not gone nearly as far as your crime."

"Lord count, I protest upon my honor" — cried Anzoleto, violently agitated.

"Where is your honor?" asked the count. "Is it in your left ear?" And at the same time he threatened this unfortunate member with a lesson like that which the other had just received.

"Have you so poor an opinion of your protege's brains," said Anzoleto, recovering his presence of mind, "as not to know that he would never commit such a piece of stupidity?"

"I am perfectly indifferent at present whether he committed it or not," said the count, dryly, and he went and sat down by Consuelo.

CHAPTER XII.

THE musical discussion lasted until they reached the drawing-room of the Zustiniani palace, where they returned about midnight to partake of chocolate and ices. From the technique of art they had passed to style, to ideas, to the ancient and modern forms; then to expression, and from that to artists, and their different ways of feeling and expressing. Porpora spoke with animation of his master Scarlatti, who had been the first to give a pathetic character to religious compositions. But he drew the line there, and would not admit that sacred music might trespass on the domain of the profane, by making use of ornaments, fiorituri, and roulades.

"Does your excellency object," said Anzoletto, "to those difficult fiorituri and ornaments which nevertheless gave success and fame to your illustrious pupil Farinelli?"

"I only object to them in church," replied the professor. "I approve of them in the theatre, but I want them in the right place, and I especially condemn the abuse of them. They should be in good taste, moderate, ingenious, elegant, and appropriate in their modulations, not only to the subject under treatment, but to the character which is being represented, to the passion which is being expressed, and to the

situation in which the person happens to be. Nymphs and shepherdesses may coo like birds or tune their accents to the murmur of fountains, but Medea and Dido can only sob, or moan like a wounded lioness. A coquette may load her sportive cavatina with capricious and ingenious ornaments. Corilla is excellent in this style ; but when she tries to express profound emotions and great passions, she never rises to the height of her part. In vain she works herself up, in vain she forces her voice and her lungs ; a misplaced ornament, an absurd roulade, change in an instant the sublime effect which she thought she was achieving into a ridiculous parody. You have all heard Faustina Pardini, now Madam Hasse. In certain roles which were suited to her brilliant qualities she was without a rival. But let Cuzzoni, with her pure and lofty feeling, give expression to grief, prayer, or love, and the tears which she drew from you washed from your hearts the memory of all the marvels with which Faustina had filled your ears. There is a material talent and a genius of the soul, that which amuses and that which moves, that which astonishes and that which delights. I know very well that vocal gymnastics are popular just now, but as for me, although I teach them to my pupils as useful accessories, I almost regret it when I see most of them use their ornaments without discretion, and sacrifice a necessity to a luxury, the lasting emotion of an audience to exclamations of surprise and the applause which springs from a feverish and short-lived pleasure."

Nobody contested the truth of this conclusion, which is eternally true in every art, and which will be always applied to the different manifestations of all arts by people of pure taste. Nevertheless, the count, who was curious to know how Consuelo would sing secular music, pretended to object a little to the austerity of Porpora's principles. But seeing that the modest girl, instead of answering his heresies, turned her eyes towards her old master as if to beg him to reply to them, he resolved to attack her directly, and to ask her if she knew how to sing on the stage as well and as purely as she did in church.

"I do not think," she answered with sincere humility, "that I should find the same inspiration there, and I am afraid that I should please you far less."

"This modest reply reassures me," said the count, "and I am certain that the presence of an enthusiastic, curious, and, I admit, rather spoiled public will inspire you sufficiently for you to condescend to study these brilliant difficulties for which the taste of the public seems to increase every day."

"Study!" said Porpora, with a mocking smile.

"Study!" cried Anzoleto, with sublime contempt.

"Yes, certainly, study," said Consuelo, with her wonted sweetness. "Although I have sometimes practised this kind of work, I do not believe that I am yet fit to compete with the illustrious singers who have appeared on our stage."

"It is not true!" said Anzoleto, greatly excited.

"Monsignore, it is not true ! Make her sing the most elaborate and difficult airs in the repertory, and you will see what she can do."

"If I were not afraid of tiring her," — said the count, whose eyes were sparkling with impatience and curiosity.

Consuelo looked ingenuously toward Porpora, as if to take his orders.

"After all," said the master, "as she is not so easily fatigued, and as we are in small but excellent company, we may as well examine her talent in all its different aspects. Come, count, choose an air, and accompany her on the clavecin yourself."

"The emotion which her voice and her presence cause me would make me play false notes. Why not you, professor?"

"I wish to watch her sing," said Porpora, "for between you and me, I have always listened to her without thinking of watching her. I must know how she carries herself, and what she does with her mouth and her eyes. Come, get up, my child. The trial is for my benefit, too !"

"Then I will accompany her," said Anzoletto, as he sat down at the clavecin.

"You will frighten me too much, my master," said Consuelo to Porpora.

"Only fools are frightened," replied the old man. "Whoever feels a real love of his art can never be afraid. If you tremble, you have nothing but vanity ; if your powers fail you, they are only artificial ; and if

that is the case, I will be the first to say, 'Consuelo is good for nothing!'

And without concerning himself about the disastrous effect that such tender encouragement might produce, the master put on his spectacles, sat down directly in front of his pupil, and began to beat time on the case of the clavecin to give the proper movement to the ritornello. They had chosen a brilliant, odd, and difficult air from a comic opera by Galuppi, "*La Diavolessa*," so as to plunge at once into a style as different as possible from that in which Consuelo had won her triumph in the morning. The young girl had such marvellous facility that she had succeeded in performing with her flexible and powerful voice all the known vocal feats, and that almost without practice. Porpora had advised her to study these exercises, and from time to time had gone over them with her, to be sure that she did not neglect them. But he had never given them enough time and attention to know how much his wonderful pupil could do in this direction. To pay him back for his roughness, Consuelo overloaded the extravagant air from "*La Diavolessa*" with a multitude of ornaments and *fiorituri* which had before that been considered impossible, and which she improvised as coolly as if they had been written out in advance and carefully studied. These ornaments were so learned in their modulations, so energetic in character, so infernal, and mingled in the midst of their most impetuous gayety with such mournful tones, that a thrill of terror was joined with

the enthusiasm of the audience, and Porpora, springing suddenly to his feet, cried in a loud voice, —

“You are the devil himself!”

Consuelo finished her air with a powerful crescendo which called forth shouts of enthusiasm, and then sat down on her chair with a burst of laughter.

“You bad child!” said Porpora, “you ought to be hanged for playing me such a trick. You have made a fool of me. You have concealed from me the half of your studies and your abilities. It is a long while since I have been able to teach you anything, and yet you have taken my lessons from hypocrisy, or perhaps to extract from me all my secrets of composition and teaching, so as to excel me in everything, and then make me pass for an old pedant.”

“My master,” said Consuelo, “I have only imitated your trick on the Emperor Charles. Did you not tell me the story, how His Imperial Majesty did not like trills, and forbade you to introduce a single one in your oratorio, and how, having scrupulously obeyed his orders to the very close of the work, you introduced a divertimento at the end, beginning the final figure with four trills in an ascending scale, and then repeating them afterwards by all the parts in the stretto, *ad infinitum*? This afternoon you condemned the abuse of ornaments, and then ordered me to employ them. I used too many, to show you that I too can exaggerate, as I am willing enough to admit.”

“I repeat that you are the devil himself,” replied Porpora. “Now sing us something human, and

sing it as you choose, for I see that I can no longer be your master."

"You will always be my dear and revered master," she cried, as she threw her arms about his neck and almost choked him in her embrace. "For the last six years I have owed you my bread and my teaching. Oh, my master, they say that your pupils are ungrateful. May heaven take from me all its gifts if pride or ingratitude ever finds a place in my heart!"

Porpora became pale, stammered a few words, and placed a fatherly kiss upon her brow. But with it he left a tear, and as Consuelo did not dare to wipe it away, it dried slowly, this cold and mournful tear of deserted old age and unfortunate genius. She felt a deep emotion and something like a religious awe which swept away all her gayety and stilled her animation for the rest of the evening. An hour later, when they had exhausted all the expressions of admiration, surprise, and delight, without being able to dispel her sadness, they asked her for a specimen of her dramatic powers. She sang an air by Jomelli, from the opera of "*Didone Abbandonata*." Never had she felt so strongly the need of giving expression to her sadness. She was sublime in her pathos, her simplicity, and her grandeur, and her face was even more beautiful than it had been in church. A feverish flush had crimsoned her cheeks, and her eyes sent forth lurid gleams. She was no longer a saint, but what was still better, a woman utterly possessed and carried away by the passion of love.

The count, his friend Barberigo, Anzoletto, all the listeners, even old Porpora himself, I fancy, came near losing their heads. Clorinda was choking with envy. Consuelo, when the count declared that her engagement should be drawn up and signed on the next day, begged him to pledge his word, like the knights of old, without knowing what he promised. He did it, and the party broke up, worn out by that delightful emotion which can only be caused by something truly great, springing from a great intelligence.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Consuelo was winning all these triumphs, Anzoleto had shared so entirely in them that he had quite forgotten himself. But when the count announced the engagement of his betrothed without saying a word about his own, he noticed the coldness with which he had been treated during the last few hours, and the dread of losing Zustiniani's favor spoiled all his pleasure. He thought of leaving Consuelo on Porpora's arm upon the stairs, and of returning to fall at the feet of his protector; but as he hated him at the moment, it must be said to his credit that he resisted the temptation to humble himself before him. As he was saying good-night to Porpora, and was preparing to start along the canal with Consuelo, the count's gondolier stopped him, and said that, in accordance with his master's orders, the gondola was waiting to take Signora Consuelo home. A cold sweat stood on Anzoleto's brow.

"Signora Consuelo is accustomed to travel on her legs," he replied roughly. "She is greatly obliged for the count's politeness."

"By what right do you refuse for her?" asked the count, who was at his heels.

Anzoleto turned and saw him, not with his head bare, like one who is showing his guests out, but with

his cloak over his shoulders, his sword in one hand, and his hat in the other, as if going out for a night's adventures. Anzoleto was seized with such a rage that he thought of plunging into the count's vitals that slender and sharp-pointed knife which every Venetian man of the people always carries concealed in some invisible pocket of his apparel.

"I hope, madam," said Zustiniani firmly, "that you will not affront me by refusing to allow my gondola to take you home, and grieve me by not allowing me to offer you my arm to get in."

Consuelo, who was as innocent as ever, and did not in the least suspect what was going on about her, thanked the count, and, placing her pretty, rounded elbow in his hand, sprang into the gondola without ceremony. Then a silent but energetic dialogue took place between the count and Anzoleto. Zustiniani, with one foot on the bank, looked Anzoleto over from head to foot, and the latter returned the look, but with a savage expression, and holding his hand hidden in his breast, clasping the handle of his knife. Had the count made a motion towards the boat, he would have been a dead man. The most Venetian feature of this rapid and silent scene was that the two rivals watched each other without doing anything to hasten the threatened catastrophe. The count intended simply to torture his rival by an apparent hesitation, and he did it at his leisure, although he saw well enough and understood still better the gesture made by Anzoleto, who was on the point of poniard-

ing him. On his part, Anzoleto had self-control enough to wait, without betraying himself openly, until the count should decide whether to end his savage jest, or to throw away his life. This lasted two minutes, which seemed an age to him, and which the count bore with stoical contempt. Then Zustiniani made a profound bow to Consuelo, and, turning to his protege, said,—

“I will allow you to go along in my gondola. In the future you will know how a gentleman behaves.”

He drew back to leave room for Anzoleto to pass. Then he told the gondoliers to row to the Corte Minelli, and remained standing on the bank, motionless as a statue. He seemed to be firmly awaiting another murderous impulse on the part of his humbled rival.

“How did the count know where you live?” was the first thing Anzoleto said to his friend when the Zustiniani palace was out of sight.

“Because I told him,” replied Consuelo.

“Why did you tell him?”

“Because he asked me.”

“Cannot you guess why he wanted to know?”

“Apparently to send me home.”

“You think that is all? Do you not think he will come to see you?”

“Come to see me? What an absurd idea! In such a wretched place! It would be an excess of politeness on his part which I do not at all care for.”

“You are wise not to care for it, Consuelo; for this

excess of honor might result in an excess of shame for you."

"Shame! Why shame? Really, Anzoléto, I cannot understand your talk at all this evening; and I think it is very strange that you keep saying things which I do not understand, instead of telling me how glad you are of the un hoped for and incredible success of our day."

"Unhoped for, indeed!" murmured Anzoletto, bitterly.

"It appeared to me that at vespers, and again this evening, when they were applauding me, you were more intoxicated with happiness than I. You looked at me so passionately, and I took so much pleasure in my good fortune when I saw it reflected in your face. But for the last few minutes you have seemed sad and strange, as you sometimes are when we have nothing to eat, and our future appears dark and uncertain."

"And now you wish me to be glad of the future? It is possible that it may not be uncertain, but I assuredly see nothing in it very pleasant for me."

"What more can you ask? It is hardly a week since you made your debut at the count's with immense success" —

"My success with the count has been pretty thoroughly eclipsed by yours, my dear, as you know very well."

"I hope not! Besides, even if it were, we could never be jealous of one another."

This speech, made in an irresistible tone of tenderness and truth, restored Anzoleto's tranquillity.

"Oh, you are right!" he cried, pressing his betrothed in his arms; "we can never be jealous of one another, for we could never deceive each other."

But as he pronounced these last words, he remembered remorsefully his adventure with Corilla, and it suddenly occurred to him that the count, to complete his punishment, would not fail to reveal it to Consuelo whenever he thought that she had encouraged his hopes in the smallest degree. He fell back into his mournful reverie, and Consuelo also became thoughtful.

"Why do you say that we can never deceive each other?" she said, after a moment's silence. "It is very true, but what made you think of it?"

"Let us not talk any more in this gondola," he said in a low voice, "I am afraid that they may listen to what we say and repeat it to the count. This roof of silk and velvet is very thin, and these private boatmen have ears four times wider and deeper than the public ones. Let me go up to your room with you," he said, when they had landed on the quay at the entrance of the Corte Minelli.

"You know that it is contrary to our custom and our agreement," she replied.

"Oh, do not refuse me that! You will fill my heart with rage and despair," said Anzoleto.

Frightened by his tone and his words, Consuelo did not dare to refuse, and when she had lighted her lamp

and drawn her curtains, seeing him still gloomy and sunk in his reflections, she wound her arms about his neck and said to him sadly, —

“How unhappy and anxious you seem this evening ! What is the matter?”

“Do you not know, Consuelo? Do you not suspect?”

“No, upon my soul !”

“Swear that you cannot guess ! Swear it by the soul of your mother and by the Christ to whom you pray morning and night !”

“Oh ! I swear it by Christ and by the soul of my mother !”

“And by our love?”

“By our love, and by our eternal salvation.”

“I believe you, Consuelo ; for if you utter an untruth it would be the first which you had ever told me.”

“And now will you explain?”

“I will explain nothing. Perhaps I may soon have to tell you. Ah, when the time comes for that, you will already have understood only too well ! Woe, woe to us both when you know what I suffer now !”

“O heaven ! what dreadful misfortune is threatening us ? Alas ! was it ordained that a curse should hang over us when we came back to this poor room, where neither of us has ever before had a secret from the other ? Something warned me when I went out this morning that I should return with a blight upon my heart. What have I done that such a successful

day should bring no joy to me? Have I not prayed God earnestly and sincerely? Have I not put away all proud thoughts? Have I not sung as well as I could? Did I not grieve because of Clorinda's humiliation? Have I not obtained from the count, without his suspecting it and without his being able to retract, his promise that she should be engaged as *seconda-donna* with us? Again I ask, what wrong have I done to feel the sorrow of which you warn me, and which I already feel, because you feel it?"

"Really, Consuelo, did you think of having Clorinda engaged?"

"I have made up my mind that she shall be, if the count is a man of his word. The poor girl has always dreamed of the theatre, and there is no other life possible for her."

"Do you think that the count will send away Rosalba, who knows something, to take Clorinda, who does not know anything?"

"Rosalba will follow the fortunes of her sister Corilla; and as for Clorinda, we will give her lessons, and show her how to make as much as possible out of her voice, which is pretty. Besides, if I could secure her an engagement as third woman only, it would still be an engagement, an opening to career."

"You are an angel, Consuelo! But do you not see that this creature, who ought to be grateful if she is even third or fourth woman, will never forgive you for being first?"

“What do I care for her ingratitude? Ah! I know a great deal about ingratitude and ungrateful people.”

“You?” cried Anzoletto, with a burst of laughter, and kissing her with all his old brotherly warmth.

“Yes,” she answered, delighted at having diverted his thoughts from his anxieties. “I have always had before my eyes, and I shall always have graven on my heart, the picture of my noble master, Porpora. Often in my presence, bitter and meaning words have fallen from him which he thought I could not understand, but which sank deep into my soul. He is a man who has suffered bitterly, and is wasting away with grief. From his sadness, from his concentrated indignation, from speeches which I have heard him make, I have learned that artists are more dangerous and more spiteful than you think, dear love; that the public is inconstant, forgetful, cruel, and unjust; that a great career is a heavy cross to bear, and that glory is a crown of thorns. Yes, I know all that, and I have thought of it so often, I have reflected about it so much, that I feel myself strong enough not to be much astonished, and not to be too easily cast down when I go through the experience myself. That is why I was not intoxicated by my triumph to-day, and that also is why I am not discouraged now by your dark forebodings. I do not yet know what they are, but I know that with you, and as long as you love me, I can struggle so bravely that I shall never come to hate the whole human race, like my noble but unfortunate master.”

Hearing his friend speak in this way, Anzoleta recovered his courage and serenity. She had a strong influence over him, and he always found in her a firmness of character and an uprightness of purpose which made up for what he himself lacked. The terrors with which jealousy had filled him vanished from his memory after he had talked to her for a quarter of an hour, and when she questioned him anew, he was so ashamed of having suspected so pure and calm a being that he gave other reasons for his agitation.

"I have but one fear," he said, "and that is that the count may find you so superior to me that he may not think me worthy to appear beside you. He did not make me sing this evening, although I expected that he would ask us for a duet. He seemed to have forgotten my very existence. He did not even notice that I accompanied you, and yet I played the clavecin rather nicely. And when he told you that you would be engaged, he did not say a word about me. How is it that you did not notice such a curious thing?"

"It never occurred to me that he could possibly wish to engage me without you. Does he not know that nothing could induce me to do it, that we are betrothed, that we love each other? Have you not told him that already?"

"I have told him, but he may have thought I was boasting, Consuelo."

"Then I will boast of my love myself, Anzoleta; I will tell him all this so distinctly that he can have no doubt. But you are mistaken, my friend. The

count did not think it necessary to speak of your engagement, because it is all settled and decided upon, since the evening when you sang at his palace with such success."

"But it is not signed! And yours is to be signed to-morrow," he said.

"Do you think that I would sign first? Oh, no indeed! You are right to put me on my guard. My name shall only be written beneath yours."

"You swear it?"

"Oh, fie! Do you wish to make me swear to a thing which you know so well? Really, you do not love me this evening, or you wish to make me unhappy, for you pretend to believe that I do not love you."

At this idea Consuelo's eyes filled with tears, and she sat down with a pout which made her look charming.

"It is true; I am a fool, an ass," thought Anzoletto. "How could I imagine that the count could triumph over such a pure soul and such a perfect love? Is he not experienced enough to see at a glance that Consuelo is above his reach? No, no! My future is assured, and my position impregnable. Suppose Consuelo does please him, and he loves her and pays court to her. All that will only serve to advance my fortune, for Consuelo will easily be able to get from him whatever she wishes without exposing herself to danger. She is wise and prudent. The dear count's pretensions will only redound to my profit and glory."

And flinging his doubt to the winds, he threw himself at his friend's feet, and gave way to the passionate enthusiasm which he felt that day for the first time, but which jealousy had repressed in him for the last few hours.

"Oh, my beauty, my saint, my queen!" he cried, "forgive me for thinking of myself instead of casting myself at your feet to adore you, as I should have done as soon as we were alone in this room. I went from here this morning scolding you. Yes, yes, I ought never to have come back but upon my knees. How can you still love and smile upon such a brute as I am? Break your fan on my face, Consuelo! Place your pretty foot upon my head! You are a thousand times better than I, and I am your devoted slave forever."

"I do not deserve all these fine speeches," she answered, as she gave herself up to his embrace, "and I forgive your preoccupation, because I can understand it. I know that it was the fear of being separated from me, and of seeing our lives divided, which filled you with grief and anxiety. You have failed in faith in God, which is worse than if you had accused me of a meanness. But I will pray for you and say, 'Lord, forgive him, as I forgive him!'"

As she thus gave expression to her love, freely and simply, mingling with it, as was her wont, that Spanish devotion which is full of human tenderness, Consuelo was so beautiful that Anzoleto was wholly carried away. Pressing her rapturously to his heart, he cried, —

“Oh, my love, my love! Be my wife! Be mine wholly and forever!”

“Whenever you wish,” replied Consuelo with a heavenly smile. “To-morrow, if you like.”

“To-morrow? Why to-morrow?”

“You are right; it is more than midnight. So we can be married to-day. As soon as it is dawn we can go and find the priest. Neither of us has any family, so we do not need much preparation for the ceremony. I have my muslin dress, which I have never worn. Do you know, my friend, that as I made it I said to myself, ‘I have no more money to buy another, and if my friend makes up his mind to marry me one of these days I shall have to wear to church a dress that has already been worn.’ That is unlucky, they say; and when my mother, in my dream, took it from me and folded it away, she knew what she was about, poor soul! Therefore I am all ready. To-morrow at sunrise we will plight our troth. Were you only waiting, you rogue, till you knew I was handsome?”

“Ah, what a child you are, Consuelo!” cried Anzoleto. “We cannot be married suddenly in this way without letting any one know, for the count and Porpora, whose protection is still so necessary to us, would be greatly incensed if we were to do it without consulting or even notifying them. Your old master is not fond of me, and I know on good authority that the count does not like married singers. We must take time to induce them to consent to our marriage, or, if we are married secretly, we shall need a few

days at least to arrange it safely. We cannot go carelessly off to San-Samuel, for if any old woman were present, the whole parish would know it in an hour."

"I had not thought of all that ; but it was not I who suggested getting married, Anzoleto. Although I have often thought that we are old enough to be married, and had never thought of the obstacles you mention, I preferred to leave the decision to your prudence, and—must I say it—to the promptings of your heart ; for I saw that you were in no hurry to call me your wife. Yet I was not hurt at it, for you had often told me that before marrying we must insure the comfort of our future family by securing a livelihood ourselves. My mother told me the same thing, and I thought it quite reasonable. So, everything considered, it is still too soon. We must both have our engagements with the theatre signed, and we must even be sure of the favor of the public. We will talk about it again after our debut. Why do you turn so pale? O heaven ! you hurt my hand, Anzoleto. Are we not happy? Do we need to be bound by an oath to love and trust each other?"

"O Consuelo ! how calm, how pure, how cold you are !" cried Anzoleto, in a sort of rage.

"Cold ! I cold?" cried the young Spaniard astounded, and scarlet with indignation.

"Alas ! I love you with a passion which you cannot understand ! You do not know what love is ; you think only of friendship. I am suffering, burning,

dying at your feet, and you talk to me of gowns and the theatre ! ”

Consuelo, who had risen impetuously, sat down again, embarrassed and trembling. She was silent for a long while, and when Anzoletto wished to clasp her once more in his arms, she gently repelled him.

“Cold? Yes, if you like,” she said, at last ; “but God, who sees my heart, knows how well I love you ! ”

“Then cast yourself on his bosom,” said Anzoletto, angrily, “for mine is not a safe enough refuge for you, and if I do not go away, I shall become impious.”

He ran to the door, thinking that Consuelo, who had never been willing to part from him in a quarrel, no matter how trifling, without trying to be reconciled to him, would hasten to call him back. She did, indeed, make an impulsive movement as if to go after him ; then she stopped, saw him go out, hurried to the door and put her hand on the latch to open it and call him. But clinging to her resolution by a super-human effort, she bolted the door, and exhausted by the severity of the struggle, fell fainting on the floor, where she lay motionless until daybreak.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I CONFESS that I have fallen madly in love with her," said Count Zustiniani to his friend Barberigo that evening, as they sat on the balcony of his palace in the darkness and silence of the night.

"That is a warning to me that I must take care not to do the same thing myself," said the young and brilliant Barberigo, "and I submit, for your rights take precedence of mine. Still, if Corilla were to succeed in again entangling you in her net, be good enough to let me know, and I can try my own luck."

"Do not think of it, if you love me ! Corilla has never been anything more than a pastime for me. I see by your face that you are laughing at me."

"No, but I think it a pretty serious pastime which makes you spend such enormous sums and commit such follies."

"I grant that I am rather extravagant in my amusements. But in this case it is more than a desire ; it is, I fancy, a real passion. I have never seen any one so strangely beautiful as this Consuelo. She is like a lamp which grows dim from time to time, but just when it seems about to go out, shines up with so great a brightness that the stars, as our poets say, pale beside it."

"Ah !" said Barberigo, with a sigh, "that little

black gown and white collar ; that pale, calm face, inexpressive at first sight ; those frank and straightforward manners ; that astonishing absence of coquetry, — how they are all transformed and glorified when she becomes inspired by her own genius and sings ! Happy Zustiniani, who hold in your hands the fate of this dawning ambition ! ”

“ Would that I were sure of the happiness which you envy me ! But, on the contrary, I am alarmed at not finding any of the feminine passions with which I am familiar, and which are so easy to work upon. Can you understand, dear friend, that this girl remains an enigma to me after a whole day of study and observation ? It seems to me, from her calmness and my own awkwardness, that I must be already so much in love with her that I cannot see clearly.”

“ You are certainly more in love than need be if you have become blind. I, who am not disturbed by any hopes at all, will tell you in three words what you do not understand. Consuelo is a pearl of innocence. She loves little Anzoleto, and will still love him for a few days longer ; and if you interfere with this childish attachment, you will give her new power of resistance. But if you pay no attention to it, the comparison which she must make between you and Anzoleto will quickly cool her love.”

“ But he is as handsome as Apollo, the little rascal ! He has a magnificent voice, and he will make a success. Corilla is wild about him already. He is not a rival to be despised when a girl has eyes.”

"But he is poor and you are rich ; unknown, and you are all-powerful," said Barberigo. "The important thing is to know whether they are lovers or friends. In the former case the disillusion will come more quickly. You must marry Consuelo to him at once, so that within a week her master will have made her feel the weight of a chain, the torments of jealousy, and the annoyance of a guardian who is teasing, unjust and unfaithful — for the handsome tenor will be all these. I watched him carefully enough yesterday to be able to prophesy his faults and his misfortunes."

"Your plan is a disagreeable one," replied the count, "but I feel that you are right."

Unfortunately for Count Zustiniani's designs, this conversation had a listener on whom they had not counted, and who did not lose a syllable of it. After leaving Consuelo, Anzoleto, tormented afresh by his jealousy, had come back to wander near the palace of his protector, to make sure that he was not planning one of those abductions which were so much the fashion in those days, and for which impunity was almost assured to patricians. He could hear no further, for the rising moon began to throw his shadow on the pavement more and more clearly, and the two gentlemen, perceiving in this way the presence of a man under the balcony, went in and closed the window.

Anzoleto slipped away and went home to think quietly over what he had just heard. It was quite enough to make the situation clear to him, and to

enable him to profit by the virtuous advice of Barberigo to his friend. He slept scarcely two hours just before dawn, and then hurried off to the Corte Minelli. The door was still bolted, but through the cracks he could see Consuelo, fully dressed, lying asleep on her bed, as pale and still as death. The coolness of the early morning had drawn her from her swoon and she had thrown herself down on her bed, without having the strength to disrobe. Anzoletto watched her for some moments with mingled anxiety and remorse. But soon becoming impatient and frightened at this lethargic sleep, so unlike the wakeful habits of his friend, he softly enlarged with his knife a crack by which he could slip in the blade and push back the bolt. He did not succeed in this without some noise, but Consuelo was not awakened. He went in, closed the door, and knelt by her bedside, where he remained until she opened her eyes. Consuelo uttered a cry of joy at seeing him, but quickly withdrawing her arms, which she had thrown about his neck, she drew back with a gesture of affright.

“So you are afraid of me now, and instead of embracing, you draw away from me,” said Anzoletto, mournfully. “Ah, how cruelly am I punished for my fault! Forgive me, Consuelo, and see whether you ought to be afraid of your friend. I have been here watching your sleep for a whole hour! Oh, forgive me, my sister! It is the first and last time in your life that you will have had to blame and repel your brother. Never again will I offend the holiness

of our love by guilty longings. Forsake me, drive me away, if I am not true to my oath. See! here upon your virgin couch, upon your mother's death-bed, I swear to respect you as I have always respected you, and never to ask you even for a kiss, if you wish it so, until the priest has blessed us. Are you satisfied with me, dear and holy Consuelo?"

Consuelo's only reply was to press the Venetian's blond head to her heart and bedew it with tears. This outburst quieted her, and soon, falling back on her hard little pillow, she said, "I confess that I am worn out, for I could not close my eyes all night, we parted so painfully!"

"Sleep, Consuelo! sleep, dear angel!" replied Anzoletto. "Remember the night when you allowed me to sleep on your bed, while you prayed and worked at this little table. It is my turn to watch over and guard your rest. Sleep again, my child. I will look over your music and read it to myself while you slumber for an hour or two. Nobody will trouble themselves about us before evening, if at all to-day. So go to sleep, and prove to me by this confidence that you forgive me and trust me."

Consuelo replied to him by a blissful smile. He kissed her brow, and sat down at the little table, while she enjoyed a refreshing repose, full of the happiest dreams.

Anzoletto had lived so long with this young girl in a condition of calmness and innocence, that it was not difficult to resume his accustomed role after a single

outbreak of his passions. Besides, what he had heard the night before under Zustiniani's balcony had been of a nature to strengthen his resolutions. "I thank you, my fine gentlemen," he said to himself; "you have given the little rascal a lesson in morals by which he will not fail to profit. Since possession chills love, and the rights of marriage bring with them satiety and disgust, we will take good care to keep bright this flame which you think it so easy to extinguish. We will abstain from jealousy and faithlessness, and even from the joys of love. Illustrious Barberigo, your prophesies are full of sound advice, and it is a good thing to go to school to you."

In the midst of these reflections, Anzoleto, who was weary from an almost sleepless night, fell into a doze, with his head on his hands and his elbows on the table. But his sleep was light, and when the sun began to go down, he rose to see if Consuelo was still sleeping. The rays of the setting sun, coming through the open window, threw a superb purple veil over the old bed and the beautiful sleeper. She had made a curtain of her white muslin mantilla, which she had fastened to the feet of the filigree crucifix hanging above her head. This light veil fell gracefully over her flexible and admirably proportioned figure, and in the rosy half-light, drooping like a flower at eventide, with her beautiful dark hair spread over her white shoulders, and her hands folded upon her breast like a marble saint upon a tomb, she was so chaste and so divine that Anzoleto exclaimed, inwardly, "Ah, Count Zus-

tiniani ! why cannot you see her now, with me beside her, the jealous and prudent guardian of a treasure which you covet in vain !”

At that moment a little noise was heard outside, and Anzoletto recognized the splashing of water against the building in which Consuelo lived. Gondolas very rarely stopped at this poor Corte Minelli, but a demon had awakened all Anzoletto's suspicions. He climbed on a chair and looked out of a little window near the ceiling on the side next the canaletto. He saw Count Zustiniani get out of his boat and question the half-naked children who were playing on the bank. He was uncertain whether he should awaken his friend or bolt the door. But during the few minutes which the count lost in making inquiries and seeking Consuelo's room, he had time to assume a diabolical coolness and go and set the door ajar, so that any one could come in without noise or trouble. Then he sat down again at the table, took a pen, and pretended to be making notes. His heart beat violently, but his face was calm and impenetrable.

The count came in on tiptoe, taking a strange pleasure in surprising his protege, and delighted at this appearance of poverty, which he considered the most favorable condition possible for his designs. He brought Consuelo's engagement already signed, and thought that with such a passport he ought not to be too coldly received. But at the first glimpse of this singular sanctuary, in which an adorable girl slept the sleep of the angels beneath the watchful eye of

her respectful lover, poor Zustiniani lost countenance, became entangled in his cloak, which he wore over one shoulder with a conquering air, and made two or three steps awkwardly between the table and the bed without knowing whom to address. Anzoletto was revenged for the scene at the gondola on the previous night.

"My lord and my master!" he exclaimed, rising as if surprised at this unexpected visit, "I will wake my betrothed."

"No," replied the count, already recovered from his embarrassment, and ostentatiously turning his back to look at Consuelo, "I am only too glad to see her thus. I forbid you to wake her."

"Yes, yes; look at her well," thought Anzoletto; "that is all I wished."

Consuelo did not awake, and the count, lowering his voice, and putting on a gracious and serene expression, gave utterance unconstrainedly to all his admiration.

"You were right, Zoto," he said, quite at his ease; "Consuelo is the first singer in Italy, and I was wrong to doubt that she was the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Yet your excellency thought her frightful," said Anzoletto maliciously.

"You have, no doubt, repeated all my rude speeches to her; but I shall secure my pardon by an amende-honorable so complete that you will never be able to injure me by recalling my impertinence."

"Injure you, my lord ! How could I do that, even if I wished it ?"

Consuelo moved a little.

"Let her wake up without too much surprise," said the count, "and clear off that table that I may lay her engagement on it and read it over. See," he said, when Anzoletto had obeyed his orders, "you can cast your eyes over this paper while she is opening her own."

"An engagement before the trial of the debut ! Why, this is magnificent, my noble patron ! And the debut at once, before Corilla's engagement has expired !"

"That does not trouble me. There is a forfeit of a thousand sequins to Corilla, and we will pay it. That is of no account."

"But suppose Corilla creates a cabal ?"

"We will have her put in the Leads if she cabals."

"By Jove ! your excellency stops at nothing."

"Yes, Zoto," said the count firmly, "what we desire, we desire in spite of everything and everybody."

"And the conditions of the engagement are the same as for Corilla ? The same terms for a debutante without fame and reputation as for an illustrious singer who is adored by the public ?"

"Consuelo will be still more adored ; and if the old terms do not suit her, she has only to speak to have her salary doubled. Everything depends on her," he added, raising his voice a little as he saw that she was waking up. "Her fate is in her own hands."

Consuelo had heard all this while half-asleep. When she had rubbed her eyes, and made sure that it was not a dream, she slipped from her bed without thinking much of the strangeness of her situation, coiled up her hair without caring much for its disorder, wrapped herself in her mantilla, and joined in the conversation with frank confidence.

"You are too kind, count," said she ; "but I could not have the impertinence to take advantage of your goodness. I do not wish to sign an engagement before I have tried my powers in public. It would not be considerate of me. I may not please ; I may make a fiasco and be hissed. I have only to be hoarse, or embarrassed, or very ugly that evening ; and then your word would be pledged. You would be too proud to retract it, and I too proud to hold you to it."

"Ugly that evening, Consuelo?" cried the count, with blazing eyes. "You ugly? Come, look at yourself here," he added, taking her by the hand and leading her before her glass. "If you are adorable in this costume, what will it be when you are covered with jewels and dazzling in the light of your triumph?"

The count's impertinence made Anzoletto grind his teeth, but the playful indifference with which Consuelo listened to these compliments quickly quieted him.

"My lord," she said, putting away the bit of mirror which he was holding before her face, "take care not to break the remains of my glass. I value it because it has never deceived me. Ugly or handsome, I refuse your prodigal offers. And then I must tell you

frankly that I will not make a debut or sign an engagement unless my betrothed here is engaged also, for I will have no theatre and no public but his. We will not be separated because we are to be married."

This sudden declaration somewhat disconcerted the count, but he quickly recovered.

"You are right, Consuelo," he replied, "and it was never my intention to separate you. Zoto and you shall make your debut together. But we must not conceal from ourselves the fact that his talent, although remarkable, is still greatly inferior to yours"—

"I do not agree with you at all, monsignore," quickly replied Consuelo, flushing up as if she had received a personal insult.

"I know that he is your pupil, much more than of the teacher whom I gave him," replied the count with a smile. "Do not deny it, lovely Consuelo. When he learned of your intimacy, Porpora exclaimed, 'Now I am no longer surprised at certain qualities which he possesses, and which I could not reconcile with so many faults.'"

"Many thanks to the sior professore," said Anzoletto with a forced laugh.

"He will change his mind," said Consuelo. "Besides, the public will prove to this good and dear master that he is wrong."

"This good and dear master is the first critic of singing in the world," said the count. "Anzoletto will go on profiting by your lessons, and he will do well. But I repeat that we cannot settle the terms of his

engagement until we know the opinion of the public about him. Therefore, let him make his debut and we will do by him what is just, as well as what is prompted by our good-will, on which he can count."

"He will make his debut then, and I too," said Consuelo. "We are at your orders, lord count. But there shall be no contract, no signatures, before the trial; I am determined of that."

"You are not satisfied with the conditions I offer you, Consuelo? Very well, make your own, then. See, here is the pen; erase and add as you please. My signature is at the bottom."

Consuelo took the pen. Anzoleto turned pale, and the count, who was watching him, bit from very pleasure the end of his lace cravat, which he was twisting between his fingers. Consuelo made a great X across the contract, and wrote on the white space which remained below the count's signature, "Anzoleto and Consuelo engage themselves jointly upon the terms which Count Zustiniani shall be pleased to make with them after their debut, which shall take place during the next month at the San-Samuel Theatre." She signed quickly, and then handed the pen to her betrothed.

"Sign without reading," said she. "You cannot do less to prove your gratitude and your trust in your benefactor."

Anzoleto had read at a glance before signing. The count read over his shoulder.

"Consuelo," said he, "you are truly a strange girl,

an admirable creature. Come and dine with me, both of you," he said, tearing up the contract and offering his hand to Consuelo, who accepted the invitation, but begged him to go and wait in the gondola with Anzoleto while she dressed.

"Well," said she, when she was alone, "I shall certainly be able to buy a wedding dress." She put on her new gown, arranged her hair, and sprang into the stairway singing a phrase with startling power and brilliancy. The count, from excess of politeness, had insisted on waiting for her on the stairs. She thought him below in the gondola, and almost fell into his arms. But freeing herself quickly, she raised his hand to her lips with the respect of an inferior who wishes to keep her proper place. Then, turning about, she threw herself on Anzoleto's neck, and sprang, full of happiness and gayety, into the gondola, without waiting for the ceremonious escort of her somewhat mortified protector.

CHAPTER XV.

THE count, seeing that Consuelo was indifferent to gain, tried to play upon her vanity, and offered her jewels and dresses ; but these she refused. At first Zustiniani thought that she understood his secret intentions ; but he soon perceived that it was only a rustic pride with her, and an unwillingness to receive a reward before earning it through the prosperity of his theatre. Nevertheless, he insisted on her accepting a costume of white satin, saying that she could not decently appear in his drawing-room wearing her muslin gown, and begging her, out of regard for him, to leave off the dress of the common people. She consented, and submitted her handsome figure to the fashionable dressmakers, who made the most of it, and did not spare the material. Thus transformed in a couple of days into a woman of the world, and compelled also to accept a pearl necklace which the count gave her in payment for the evening when she had sung for him and his friends, she was handsomely dressed — not in a way, perhaps, which suited her style of beauty, but as she must be to be approved by the eyes of the vulgar. But this, after all, was a comparative failure. At the first glance, Consuelo did not impress or dazzle any one. She was always pale, and her retired and studious life robbed her eyes of that

brilliancy which one sees in the look of women whose only desire is to shine. Her face, like her character, was serious and reflective. One could see her eat, talk upon subjects which did not interest her, or be bored politely by the commonplaces of society, without suspecting that she was handsome. But if she smiled with that joyous expression which sprang from the serenity of her mind, people began to think her attractive. Then, when she became still more animated, when she took a lively interest in anything, when she was touched or excited, or when she displayed her inward feeling and exerted her hidden powers, she grew radiant with all the light of genius and love. She was another creature, and people were charmed, thrilled, or depressed at her will, without her being able to understand the mystery of her power.

Consequently, the feeling which the count had for her astonished and disturbed him greatly. There were artistic chords in his nature which had never been struck, but which she caused to vibrate with sensations before unknown. But this revelation could not penetrate deeply enough into his mind for him to realize the weakness and insufficiency of the means of seduction which he intended to employ with a woman who was wholly different from those he had been able to corrupt.

He took patience, and resolved to try on her the effect of emulation. He had her in his box at the theatre, that she might witness Corilla's success and have her ambition aroused. But the result of the ex-

periment was altogether different from what he expected. Consuelo left the theatre cold, silent and wearied, and not in the least excited by the noise and the applause. Corilla had seemed to her lacking in solid talent, exalted passion and real power. She felt competent to judge this talent, which was factitious, forced and tainted at its very source by a life of dissipation and selfishness. She applauded indifferently, said a few words of reserved approval, and disdained to play the comedy of a generous enthusiasm for a rival whom she could neither fear nor admire. For a moment the count thought her secretly jealous of Corilla's success, if not of her talent.

"This success is nothing to what you will win," he said to her, "but it may serve to show you what triumphs are awaiting you if you sing for the public as you sang for us. I hope that you are not frightened at what you have seen?"

"No, count," she said with a smile, "the public did not frighten me, for I did not think of it. I was thinking of how much might be made of the role which Corilla fills brilliantly indeed, but in which there are many effects which she does not see at all."

"What ! you did not think of the public?"

"No ; I thought of the score and the composer's intentions, of the spirit of the part, of the orchestration, which has its good and bad qualities, which one must sometimes make use of, and sometimes cover up. I listened to the chorus, which was not always satisfactory, and needs stricter drilling. I examined

the passages where one must use all one's power, and consequently those where one must spare one's self. You see, count, that I had many things to think of before thinking of the public, which knows nothing about all this, and can teach me nothing."

This serious judgment and thoughtful consideration so surprised the count that he could not ask her a single question, and he wondered secretly what hold such a gallant as he could have on a mind of this temper.

The appearance of the two debutants was prepared for by all the customary preliminaries, which were a source of continual wrangling between the count and Porpora, and of endless discussions between Consuelo and her betrothed. The professor and his brilliant pupil despised the quackery of the pompous announcements and the thousand vile little devices which we have so greatly improved in point of impertinence and dishonesty. Newspapers did not play a prominent part in such matters at Venice in those days. The composition of the audience was not so skilfully arranged as now, and they did not understand the enormous power of advertising, the fictions of biographical sketches, or even the strength of that mighty machine which is called a "claque." There were lively intrigues and vigorous cabals, but these were managed privately, and sprang solely from the devotion of the public to some artists, or its sincere hostility to others. Nor was art always the true motive. Great and little passions, wholly foreign to art and to talent, struggled together in the temple then as

to-day. But they were less skilled in hiding the reasons of this discord, and in laying it all to a strict love of art. There was then, in short, the same essentially vulgar human basis as now, with a surface less complicated than ours by civilization.

Zustiniani managed affairs of this sort rather like a great nobleman than the director of a theatre. His ostentation was a more powerful incentive than the cupidity of ordinary speculators. His public was schooled and the success of his performances assured in drawing-rooms. His methods were never low nor disgraceful ; but his efforts were inspired by his childish vanity and his heated passions, and he made adroit use of the gossip of good society. He went about artfully destroying, little by little, the temple which he had formerly erected with his own hands to the glory of Corilla ; and as everybody saw that he wished to build up another reputation, they credited him with the entire possession of the marvellous creature whom he intended to bring out. Therefore, while poor Consuelo was still unsuspecting of the nature of the count's sentiments towards her, all Venice was saying that Zustiniani, disgusted with Corilla, was preparing for the debut of a new mistress in her place. Many people added that it was an insult to his public and an injury to his theatre, for his new favorite was a little street-singer, who knew absolutely nothing, and had only a fine voice and a pretty face.

From this sprang cabals in favor of Corilla, who went about playing the role of a victimized rival, and

calling upon her many adorers and their friends to mete out summary justice to the Zingarella. Cabals were also formed in favor of Consuelo by the women whose admirers or husbands had been enticed away or fascinated by Corilla, by sundry husbands who preferred to have the Venetian Don Juans devote themselves to the debutante rather than to their wives, and by aspirants to Corilla's favor who had been rejected or betrayed by her, and who wished to be revenged on her by seeing her rival triumph.

As for the true lovers of music, they were equally divided by the approval of the serious masters, such as Porpora, Marcello, Jomelli, and the rest, who declared that with the appearance of a good musician there would be a return to the good traditions and to good scores, and by the dislike of the secondary composers, whose easy music had always been preferred by Corilla, and who felt that her cause was their own. The musicians of the orchestra, who were threatened by a return to scores which had been long neglected, and the consequent necessity for hard work ; and, indeed, the whole company, down to the very machinists, dressers, and wig-maker, took sides for or against the new singers. In fact, the Republic at large took more interest in this musical event than in the new administration of the doge Pietro Grimaldi, who had just succeeded his predecessor, Luigi Pisani, without any excitement whatever.

Consuelo was deeply grieved and troubled by the delays and annoyances which attended her new career.

She would have preferred to make her debut at once, with no aids save her own genius and the necessary study of the new opera. She did not at all understand the thousand intrigues which seemed to her more dangerous than useful, and with which she felt that she could safely dispense. But the count, who had a deeper insight into the secrets of the trade, and who wished to be envied rather than ridiculed for his supposed conquest, spared no pains to gain partisans for her. He made her come to his palace every day, and presented her to all the aristocracy of the city and the neighboring country. Consuelo's modesty and her mental distress prevented her being of much help to his designs until he made her sing, but then the victory was brilliant, decisive and unquestionable.

Anzoleto, however, by no means shared his friend's dislike for these secondary means of success. His own prospects were far from being as assured as hers. The count was not so anxious about him, in the first place, and in the second, the tenor whom he was to succeed had talent of the first order, which it would be no easy thing for him to banish from the memory of the public. It is true that he sang at the Zustiniani palace every evening, that Consuelo set off his voice admirably in the duos, and that he sometimes rose to a great height, uplifted and supported as he was by the magnetic power of a genius greater than his own. He was accordingly much applauded and greatly encouraged. But after the surprise created by his beautiful voice had died away, and especially

after Consuelo had revealed her marvellous powers, people recognized the imperfections in the young tenor, and he perceived them himself with a feeling of dread. Now, if ever, was the time to work with redoubled ardor ; but it was in vain that Consuelo made appointments with him every day in the Corte Minelli, where she insisted on remaining in spite of the entreaties of the count, who wished to place her in more suitable lodgings. Anzoletto plunged into such a quantity of negotiations, visits, solicitations and intrigues, and burdened his mind with such wretched cares and anxieties that he had neither the time nor the courage to study.

In the midst of these perplexities, foreseeing that the most serious opposition to his success would come from Corilla, and knowing that the count no longer either visited her or concerned himself about her in any way, he resolved to go to see her, and gain her favor. He had heard that she accepted Zustiniani's desertion and vengeance with the utmost gayety and a philosophic irony, that she had received brilliant offers from the Italian opera in Paris, and that, while awaiting the failure of her rival, on which she seemed to count, she was openly laughing at the illusions of the count and his friends. He thought that with prudence and deceit he might disarm this dangerous enemy, and, having decked and perfumed himself to the best of his power, he went to her apartments one afternoon at an hour when the habit of the siesta makes visits few and palaces silent.

CHAPTER XVI.

HE found Corilla alone in an exquisite boudoir, half-asleep on her sofa, and in a most gallant undress, as the expression was in those days. But the change in her face made him think that her indifference to Consuelo was not so great as her faithful partisans pretended. Still, she received him with a sportive manner, and said, tapping him archly on the cheek and motioning to her maid to go out and close the door, —

“Ah! is it you, little scamp? Have you come to say more pretty things to me, and to try to make me believe that you are not the most deceitful of flatterers and the most intriguing of aspirants for glory? You were terribly conceited, my young friend, if you thought I cared for your sudden desertion after all your fine speeches, and you were a great fool to hope that you could make me wish for you by staying away, for I forgot all about you in twenty-four hours.”

“Twenty-four hours? It is immense!” replied Anzoletto, as he kissed Corilla’s large and heavy arm. “Oh, if I could believe that, I should be very proud! but I know well that if I had allowed myself to believe you when you said” —

“I advise you to forget what I said, and if you had come to see me, you would have found my door

closed. But what gives you the impudence to come to-day?"

"It is not in good taste to refrain from prostrating one's self before those who are in favor, but to come and offer one's heart and one's devotion to those who" —

"Go on—to those who are in disgrace? It is very generous and very humane of you, my illustrious friend!" And Corilla threw herself back on her pillows with sharp peals of laughter which seemed hardly sincere.

The disgraced prima donna was not in her first freshness, and the light of midday was not very favorable to her, while her handsome face had suffered somewhat from her concentrated fury during the last few days. But Anzoletto, who had never been alone with so beautiful and so famous a woman, felt moved in those regions of his soul into which Consuelo had never been willing to descend, and from which he had voluntarily banished her pure image. When Corilla saw that he was really impressed, she grew gentle and rallied him more kindly.

"You did please me for a whole evening, I confess," said she, "but I do not really esteem you. I know that you are ambitious, and consequently false and ready to commit any infidelity. I could never trust you. You pretended to be jealous one night in my gondola, and you posed as a tyrant. That would have amused me after all the insipid gallantries of our patricians, but you were deceiving me, wretched child!

You were then, and you still are, in love with another woman, and you are going to marry — whom? Oh, I know very well! my rival, my enemy, the debutante, Zustiniani's new favorite."

"Cruel creature! You ought to understand what happened to me when I first saw you, and not care for what I intended before that fateful moment. As for what has happened since then, can you not guess it? What need is there for us to think about it now?"

"I will not be satisfied with hints and reservations. Do you still love the Zingarella? Are you going to marry her?"

"If I love her, how is it that I am not married to her already?"

"Then I can have her hissed without making you unhappy?"

"Alas, madamē! do you wish to prevent my debut? You surely know that I come out at the same time as Consuelo. If you have her hissed, I too shall fail, and be a victim of your anger. And what have I done to displease you? Alas, I dreamed a delicious and fatal dream! I fancied that you took some interest in me, and that I should grow famous under your protection. Yet now I am the object of your contempt and your hatred, — I, who loved and respected you so much that I fled from you. Well, madame, satisfy your dislike; cause me to fail, ruin me, spoil my future. If you will only tell me in private that I am not odious to you, I will accept all the public marks of your disdain."

"Serpent that you are !" cried Corilla, "where did you find the poisonous flattery that lurks in your tongue and in your eyes? I would give a great deal to know and to understand you, but I am afraid of you, for you are either the most fascinating of lovers or the most dangerous of enemies."

"I your enemy? How could I ever dare to be that, even if I were not a slave to your charms? Have you enemies, divine Corilla? Have you enemies in Venice, where every one knows you, and where you have always reigned without a rival? A lover's quarrel irritates the count. He wishes to drive you away ; he wishes to cease to suffer. He finds a little girl who seems to possess some ability, and who asks nothing better than to make her debut. Is that a crime in a poor child who never hears your illustrious name without terror, and who never speaks it but with respect? You attribute to the poor thing insolent pretensions which she never thought of setting up. The count's efforts to make his friends like her, the kindness of these friends, who exaggerate her merits, the injustice of your own friends, who spread abroad calumnies to imbitter and to afflict you, when they ought to be restoring peace to your noble mind or pointing out your unapproachable glory and the terrors of your rival, — these are the causes of the prejudice which I find in you, and at which I am so astonished, so stunned, that I do not know how to set about combating it."

"You know how only too well," said Corilla, look-

ing at him with mingled tenderness and distrust. "I listen to your soft words, but my reason still tells me to fear you. Consuelo is divinely beautiful, although they tell me the contrary; and she must have a certain merit in a style unlike my own, since Porpora, whose judgment is so severe, proclaims it openly."

"You know Porpora, and you must understand his oddities — his manias, one might say. He is an enemy to all originality in others, and to all innovations in the art of singing; and if a little pupil is very attentive to his maunderings and submissive to his pedantic lessons, he will declare that a scale nicely sung by her is superior to all the marvels which the public adores. How long have you troubled yourself about the crotchets of this old fool?"

"Then she has no talent?"

"She has a fine voice, and she sings respectably in church. But she cannot know anything about the stage, and as for the power which she must display there, she is so paralyzed with terror that it is greatly to be feared that she will lose what few faculties Heaven has given her."

"She is afraid? They told me, on the contrary, that she was strangely bold."

"Oh, the poor child! Alas, how they must hate her! You will hear her, divine Corilla, and you will be so moved by a noble pity that you will encourage her instead of hissing her, as you threatened in jest a moment ago."

“Either you are lying to me, or my friends have greatly deceived me about her.”

“Your friends have been deceived themselves. In their indiscreet zeal, they are frightened at the idea of a rival to you. Afraid of a child! Afraid for you! Ah, they must love you little, since they know you so little! If I had the happiness to be your friend, I should know better what you are, and I should not do you the injustice to fear any rivalry for you, even that of a Faustina or a Molteni.”

“Do not fancy that I have been frightened. I am neither jealous nor spiteful; and as the success of others has never interfered with my own, I have never cared about it. But when I think that they wish to brave me, and to make me suffer” —

“Do you wish me to bring little Consuelo to your feet? If she had dared, she would already have come to ask your support and your advice. But she is such a timid child! And then, they have slandered you to her. They have told her that you were cruel and vindictive, and intended to cause her to fail.”

“They have told her that? Then I can understand why you are here.”

“No, madame, you cannot understand it, for I never believed it for a moment, and I never shall believe it. Oh, no, madame! You do not understand me.”

As he spoke, Anzoleto flashed his dark eyes upon Corilla and bent his knee before her with an incomparable expression of languor and tenderness.

Corilla was not without cleverness and penetration ; but as often happens to women excessively in love with themselves, vanity sometimes placed a thick bandage over her eyes, and caused her to fall into very clumsy snares. Besides, her heart was inflammable, and Anzoletto was the handsomest fellow she had ever seen. She could not resist his honeyed words, and within a week of this first interview she was madly in love with him. Anzoletto was somewhat frightened at the too rapid and too complete success of his enterprise. Still, he flattered himself that he would be able to control her long enough for him to accomplish his end, which was to prevent her interfering with his debut and Consuelo's success. He showed great cleverness in dealing with her, and as he had a faculty of lying with a diabolical appearance of truth, he was able to enchain her, to persuade her, to master her. He even made her believe that what he admired above everything in a woman was generosity, sweetness, and sincerity, and he adroitly marked out for her the course which she was to follow in public towards Consuelo, if she did not wish him to hate and despise her. He knew how to be severe with an appearance of tenderness, and, concealing a threat under words of praise, pretended to take her for an angel of goodness. Poor Corilla had played all sorts of parts in her boudoir except this one, and this she had always played badly upon the stage. But she submitted, from fear of losing Anzoletto, who also made her think that the count was still in love

with her, in spite of his anger, and secretly jealous, although he boasted the opposite, and Corilla's vanity loved to be deceived. She thought that she had nothing to dread in Anzoletto's feelings for Consuelo, and there was such an appearance of truth in his protestations that her jealousy was quite lulled to sleep. As the great day drew near, the cabal which she had formed was broken up. For Anzoletto's sake, she now worked in their favor, convinced that Consuelo would fail in any case, and that Anzoletto would be infinitely grateful to her for not having contributed to her fall. Besides, he had already had the tact to embroil her with her firmest champions, by pretending to be jealous of their attentions, and by forcing her to turn them away rather rudely.

While he was thus working in the dark to disappoint the hopes of the prima donna, the wily Venetian boasted to the count and Consuelo that he had disarmed the dangerous enemy of their triumph by adroit measures, courteous visits and bold lying. The count, who was frivolous and somewhat given to gossip, was infinitely amused by the stories of his protege. His vanity triumphed in the regrets which, according to Anzoletto, Corilla felt because of their separation, and he urged the young tenor on to new treacheries.

Consuelo was surprised and grieved. "You would do far better," she said, "to practise and to study your part. You think you have done a great deal in disarming the enemy; but a note well delivered,

an inflection well understood, will have more effect on the impartial public than the silence of your enemies. You should think of this public alone, and I am sorry to see that you do not think of it at all."

"Be easy, dear Consuelo," he replied. "Your mistake is in thinking that the public is both impartial and intelligent. Those who know anything are hardly ever fair, and those who are fair know so little that boldness is enough to dazzle them and carry them away."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE anxieties accompanying his thirst for fame had put to sleep Anzoleto's jealousy of the count. Fortunately, Consuelo had no need of a more moral or more vigilant defender. Protected by her innocence, she was still safe from Zustiniani's advances, and held him at a distance simply by her indifference. At the end of a fortnight, this Venetian Lovelace realized that she had as yet none of the worldly passions which are useful aids to seduction, and he spared no pains to awaken them. But as he was no further advanced, even in this respect, than at the very first, he did not wish to ruin his chances by precipitancy. If Anzoleto had annoyed him by his watchfulness, his irritation might have impelled him to more rapid advances. But Anzoleto left him a free field, and Consuelo suspected nothing; therefore, all that he had to do was to make himself agreeable, in the hope that he might ultimately make himself necessary. Consequently, he neglected no means of pleasing, neither thoughtful attentions nor refined gallantries. Consuelo accepted all this devotion, and obstinately ascribed it to the elegant manners and liberality, to the passionate dilettanteism and natural kindness of her protector. She felt for him true friendship and sincere gratitude, and he, made happy, yet anxious, by this self-sur-

render of a pure heart, began to be frightened at the sentiment which he might inspire when he should speak at last.

While he was yielding himself with fear, yet not without pleasure, to a sentiment wholly new to him (consoling himself a little for his disappointment by the opinion which all Venice held concerning his triumph), Corilla also felt a sort of transformation taking place in her heart. She loved with ardor, if not nobly, and her irritable and imperious nature bent beneath the yoke of her young Adonis. She was, in truth, the immodest Venus in love with the handsome hunter, and timid before a mortal for the first time. She even went to the length of assuming virtues which she did not possess, and she did not affect them without feeling a sort of soft and pleasing tenderness; for the idolatry which one withdraws from one's self and gives to another, elevates and ennobles for a moment even souls least susceptible of generosity and devotion.

The emotion which she felt reacted on her talent, and it was noticed at the theatre that she played pathetic roles more naturally and with more feeling. But as her character and the very springs of her nature were poisoned, and as it required a violent and painful inward struggle to accomplish this metamorphosis, her physical strength gave way under the effort. Every day it was seen, with malicious pleasure by some, and by others with sincere regret, that she was losing her powers. Her voice grew weaker at each appearance. The brilliant caprices of her improvisa-

tion were spoiled by shortness of breath and doubtful intonation. The grief and terror which she felt completed her undoing, and at the last performance before the debut of Consuelo, she sang so false and failed in so many brilliant passages that her friends could applaud but weakly, and were soon reduced to a terrified silence by the murmurs of her opponents.

The great day arrived at last, and the theatre was so full that one could hardly breathe in it. Corilla, clad in black, pale, agitated, more dead than alive, divided between the fear of witnessing the failure of the man she loved and that of beholding the triumph of her enemy, sat down in her little dark stage-box. All the ban and arriere-ban of Venetian beauty and aristocracy came to display their flowers and jewels in a dazzling triple semicircle. The men of fashion crowded the passages and part of the stage, as the custom was in those days. The doge appeared in a proscenium-box, with all the great dignitaries of State. Porpora conducted the orchestra in person, and Count Zustiniani waited at the door of Consuelo's dressing-room until she should finish her toilet, while Anzoletto, decked out as an ancient warrior with all the absurd coquetry of the period, stood half-fainting in the wings, drinking a great glass of Cyprus wine to steady his shaking knees.

The opera was not the work of a strict classic master nor of a bold modern innovator. It was the unknown work of a stranger. To avoid the cabals which his own or any other famous name would not

have failed to excite among the rival composers, Porpora, who desired the success of his pupil before everything, had suggested the score of "*Ipermnestra*," the lyric debut of a young German who, as yet, had neither friends nor enemies in Italy or anywhere else, and who was named simply Christopher Gluck.

When Anzoletto appeared upon the stage, a murmur of admiration ran through the audience. The tenor whom he succeeded was an admirable singer, but he had been unwise enough to remain on the stage until age had injured his voice and destroyed his good looks, so that he was but little missed by an ungrateful public, and the fair sex, which listens oftener with its eyes than with its ears, was charmed to see in the place of this stout, red-faced man, a lad of four-and-twenty, fresh as a rose, blond as *Phœbus*, shaped as if *Phidias* himself had modelled him; in short, a true child of the lagoons, "*bianco, crespo e grassotto*."

He was too much agitated to sing his first air well, but his magnificent voice, his fine attitudes, and some happy and original effects were enough to gain him the good-will of the women and the populace. It was clear that the debutant had great powers, and that there was a future before him. He was warmly applauded, and twice called out after leaving the stage, as is customary in Italy, and especially in Venice.

His success restored his courage, and when he reappeared with *Ipermnestra*, he was no longer afraid. But all the effects of this scene belonged to *Consuelo*; she alone was looked at and listened to. People said

to each other, "There she is! Yes, it is she! Who? the Spaniard? Yes, the debutante, Zustiniani's mistress."

Consuelo came on gravely and coldly. She looked over her public, received the applause of her protectors with a courtesy which was free from humility and coquetry alike, and delivered her recitative with so firm a voice, so grandiose a manner and so triumphant a confidence, that at her first phrase shouts of admiration arose from all parts of the building.

"Ah, the treacherous wretch has been deceiving me!" cried Corilla, casting a terrible look at Anzoletto, who could not help glancing at her just then with an ill-disguised smile. She threw herself back in her box and burst into tears.

Consuelo sang a few phrases more, and then the cracked voice of the aged Lotti was heard crying from his corner, —

"Amici miei, questo è un portento."

She sang her great opening air, and was repeatedly interrupted by applause. They cried, "Bis!" and recalled her to the stage seven times. There were perfect screams of delight. In short, the madness of Venetian dilettanteism broke forth in all its force, ridiculous yet intoxicating.

"Why are they shouting so?" asked Consuelo, as she went behind the scenes, only to be recalled before the footlights by the roars of the pit. "One would think that they wanted to stone me."

From that moment, they concerned themselves but little about Anzoleto. He was kindly treated, because the public was in a good humor ; but the indulgent coldness with which they passed over his defects, without consoling him by immoderate applause for the passages which he did really well, proved to him that, while his face pleased the women, the noisy and enthusiastic majority — the male spectators — made little account of him, and reserved its transports of delight for the prima donna. Among all those who had come with hostile intentions, not one dared to raise a murmur ; and in truth, there were not three people in the house who could resist the enthusiasm and irresistible desire to applaud the marvel of the evening.

The score had a great success, although it was not much listened to, and nobody cared much about it. It was purely Italian music, graceful and moderately pathetic, and giving little promise, they say, of the author of “*Alcestis*” and “*Orpheus*.” There were not enough striking beauties in it to displease the audience. After the first act, the German maestro was called before the curtain with the two debutants, and even Clorinda shared in the call. The latter, thanks to Consuelo’s protection, had sung the second role ; and, though she had performed it with a dull voice and a vulgar style, her handsome arms had disarmed the public. Rosalba, whose place she took, was extremely thin.

During the last intermission, Anzoleto, who had been watching Corilla carefully, and had noticed her

increasing excitement, thought it prudent to visit her in her box, so as to prevent an explosion. As soon as she saw him, she flew at him like a tigress, and gave him two or three violent slaps, the last of which was enough of a scratch to draw a few drops of blood, and leave a mark which no amount of paint could hide. The indignant tenor put an end to this outburst by a sharp blow in the breast with his fist, which knocked the half-fainting cantatrice into the arms of her sister Rosalba.

"Brute, traitor, buggiardo!" she murmured in a choking voice, "your Consuelo and you shall die by my hand!"

"If you dare to make a step, a gesture, an outbreak of any kind this evening, I will poniard you before the eyes of all Venice," said Anzoleto, pale, and with clenched teeth, as he flourished before her his faithful knife, which he knew how to throw with all the dexterity of a son of the lagoons.

"He will do as he says," said the terror-stricken Rosalba. "Be quiet! Let us go; our lives are not safe here."

"No, they are not, and beware how you forget it," replied Anzoleto, and he went out, slamming the door of the box behind him and locking it.

Although this tragi-comic scene had passed in a mysterious and rapid undertone, like all such scenes in Venice, when the debutant was seen hurrying through the passages with his handkerchief to his face, people suspected some little quarrel, and the hair-

dresser, who was called to arrange the Greek prince's ringlets and plaster up his wounds, told the whole band of chorus singers and supernumeraries that some love-lorn kitten had been using her claws on the hero's face. The anecdote ran all over the stage, leaped, I know not how, across the footlights, spread from the orchestra into the balcony and from there into the boxes, from which it descended again, somewhat grown in its journey, into the depths of the pit. Anzoletto's relations to Corilla were still unknown, but as his attentions to Clorinda had been noticed, the story was that the *seconda donna*, jealous of the *prima donna*, had just put out the handsome tenor's eye and broken three of his teeth.

It was a source of regret to some, and a delightful little scandal to most. They wondered whether the performance would be interrupted, or whether the old tenor, Stefanini, would finish the opera with a book in his hand. The curtain rose, and everything was forgotten when Consuelo was seen, as calm and sublime as at the beginning. Although her role was not extremely tragic, she made it so by the power of her acting and the expression of her singing. She drew tears from every one, and when the tenor appeared, his trifling scratch only called forth a smile. But this ridiculous incident nevertheless prevented his success from being as brilliant as it might otherwise have been, and all the honors of the evening fell to the share of Consuelo, who was recalled at the close and madly applauded.

After the opera, there was a supper at the Zustiniani palace, and Anzoleto quite forgot Corilla, whom he had locked up in her box, and who was obliged to break her way out. Amid the noise which follows so brilliant a performance, no one noticed her retreat ; but the next day, the broken door, combined with Anzoleto's scratch, put the public on the track of an intrigue which had been until then carefully concealed.

He was seated at the sumptuous banquet which the count was giving in Consuelo's honor, and was listening to the abbes, who were reciting to the triumphant singer sonnets and madrigals which they had been a couple of days in improvising, when a servant slipped under his plate a little note from Corilla, which he read by stealth, and which was as follows : —

“ If you do not come to me at once, I will seek you out and make a scene, though you were at the end of the world, or in the arms of your thrice-accursed Consuelo.”

Anzoleto pretended to be taken with a fit of coughing and went out to write this answer on a bit of ruled paper which he tore from a music-book : —

“ Come if you like ; my knife is ready, and with it my contempt and my hatred.”

The despot knew that with such a nature as hers fear was the only bridle, and a threat the only possible expedient. But in spite of himself, he was sombre and preoccupied during the supper, and as soon as they rose from the table he slipped away and hurried to Corilla.

He found the poor creature in a pitiable state. Torrents of tears had followed convulsions ; she was seated at her window with dishevelled hair and eyes swollen with weeping, and her dress, which she had torn in her fury, fell in rags over her heaving bosom. She sent away her sister and her maid, and in spite of herself, a ray of joy lit up her face when she saw beside her him whom she had feared to see no more. But Anzoletto knew her too well to try to console her.

He well knew that at the first sign of pity or repentance her fury would revive and turn to vengeance. He resolved to persevere in his role of inflexible cruelty, and although he was touched by her despair, he loaded her with the bitterest abuse, and declared that he had come to bid her an eternal farewell. He compelled her to throw herself at his feet, and drag herself on her knees to the door, and beg his forgiveness in the anguish of mortal sorrow. When he had thus completely broken her he pretended to be touched, and set about calming her. But as he grew more gentle with this tamed lioness, he never forgot that she was, after all, a wild beast, and preserved to the end the attitude of an offended master who forgives.

Day was beginning to dawn when Corilla, leaning her marble arm on the balustrade, all cold with the morning dew, and hiding her pale face in her long black hair, began to complain in a gentle and caressing voice of the tortures which her lover had caused her.

"Yes," she said, "I am jealous, if you insist upon it. I am worse than that—I am envious. I cannot

see my ten years' glory eclipsed in a moment by a new power, before which a forgetful and cruel public sacrifices me without consideration and without regret. When you have known the transports of triumph and the humiliation of decay, you will not be so exacting and so severe towards yourself as you are towards me to-day. I am still powerful, you say? Vain, successful, rich, and with splendid hopes, I can go to new countries, conquer new worshippers, charm a new public. But even if that were true, do you suppose that anything in the world would console me for being abandoned by all my friends, and driven from my throne, or for seeing a new idol set up in my place? And this disgrace, the first in my life, the only one in my whole career, is inflicted upon me in your sight. In your sight? It is inflicted by you; it is the work of my lover, of the first man whom I ever loved wholly and madly. You will say that I am false and spiteful; that I have affected a hypocritical nobleness, a lying generosity before you; but it was you who wished it so, Anzoletto. I was offended, but you bade me appear quiet, and I kept quiet. I was distrustful, but you commanded me to believe you sincere, and I believed in you. I had rage and bitterness in my heart, but you told me to smile, and I smiled. I was furious and despairing, but you ordered me to keep silent, and I was silent. What more could I do than assume a character which was not my own, and put on a courage which I could not retain? And when this courage deserts me, when my torture grows unbearable, when

I am becoming mad, and my wretchedness ought to cut you to the heart, you trample me under foot, and wish to leave me to die in the mire into which you have cast me. O Anzoleto, you have a heart of bronze, and I am as little in your eyes as the sand of the sea-shore ! Ah ! scold me, beat me, insult me, since it must be so ; but at least pity me in the bottom of your heart, and from the bad opinion you have of me, judge of the immensity of my love, since I suffer all this, and wish still to suffer it.

“But listen, my friend,” she said to him more gently, and putting her arms about him ; “what you have made me suffer is nothing to what I feel when I think of your future and your happiness. You are ruined, Anzoleto, dear Anzoleto, ruined without hope ! You do not know it, you do not suspect it, but I see it, and say to myself, ‘ If I had only been sacrificed to his ambition, if my fall had only contributed to his glory ! But no ! it has but contributed to his ruin, and I am the instrument of a rival who is putting her foot on both our necks.’ ”

“What do you mean ?” asked Anzoleto ; “I do not understand you.”

“Yet you ought to understand me ! You ought at least to understand what happened this evening. Did you not see how the public, which had been made enthusiastic by your first air, became cold towards you after she had sung as she always will sing, alas ! better than I, better than any one, and — must I say it ? — better than you, a thousand times, dear Anzoleto.

Ah ! do you not see that this woman will crush you, that she has already crushed you at your first appearance? You do not see that your beauty is eclipsed by her ugliness, — for she is ugly, I maintain, — but I know well that ugly women, when they do please, arouse more furious passions and more intense devotion than the most perfect beauties upon earth. Do you not see that they idolize her, and that whenever you are beside her, you will pass unnoticed? You do not know that to develop itself and to soar, the talent of an artist needs praise and success, as a new-born babe needs air to live and grow ; that the smallest rivalry absorbs part of the life which an artist breathes in ; and that a dangerous rivalry is a vacuum about one, — is death to us ! Yet you ought to see it by my sad example. The mere dread of this rival whom I did not know, and whom you did not wish me to fear, has been enough to paralyze me for a month ; and the nearer I drew to the day of her triumph, the more my voice deserted me, the more I felt myself fail. And yet I hardly thought this triumph possible ! What will it be now that I have seen it certain, dazzling, unassailable? Do you know that I can never appear again in Venice, perhaps even in Italy, because I should be demoralized, trembling, impotent? Who knows where this memory may not reach me, where the name or presence of this victorious rival may not follow me and put me to flight? I, alas ! am ruined ; but so are you, Anzoletto. You are dead before having lived ; and if I were as bad-hearted as

you say, I should rejoice at it, and urge you on to your destruction, and be revenged. But instead, I say to you despairingly, if you appear once more beside her in Venice, you have no longer a future in Venice ; if you follow her in her travels, shame and contempt will keep you company. If, living on her earnings and sharing in her wealth, you drag out a pale and miserable existence by her side, do you know what will be your title with the public? They will say, ‘Who is that handsome young man behind her?’ And the answer will be, ‘Nobody—less than nobody! He is the husband or the lover of the divine cantatrice!’”

Anzoleto became as sombre as the stormy clouds that were rising in the east.

“You are mad, dear Corilla,” he replied. “Consuelo is not so dangerous to you as your fevered imagination makes you think to-night. As for me, I have told you that I am not her lover, and assuredly will never be her husband ; and I will not live, like a puny bantling, under the shadow of her broad wings. There is air and space enough in the sky for all those whom a powerful flight raises from the earth. See that swallow ! Does he not fly as well over the canal as the largest gull over the sea? Come, a truce to these reveries, and farewell ! If you wish me to return, resume that sweetness and that patience which charm me, and which become you so much better than all the ravings of jealousy.”

Anzoleto, still absorbed in dark thoughts, went to

his house, and it was only when he was in bed and almost asleep that he wondered who had accompanied Consuelo home from the Zustiniani palace. It was an office which he had never left to any one else.

“After all,” he said, as he punched his pillow to arrange it under his head, “if fate wills it that the count should accomplish his ends, it is little odds to me whether it happens sooner or later !”

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Anzoletto awoke, his jealousy of Count Zustiniani revived. A thousand conflicting sentiments filled his heart. The strongest of these was the envy of Consuelo's genius and success which Corilla had aroused in him, and which sank more deeply into his heart as he compared the triumph of his betrothed with what, in his disappointed ambition, he termed his own failure. Then came the humiliation of being possibly supplanted in fact, as he already was in the belief of the public, in the affections of this woman, who would henceforth be famous and all-powerful, and whose only and sovereign love he yesterday flattered himself that he was. These jealousies strove with each other in his heart, and he did not know which to sacrifice to the other. He had to choose between two courses, — either to remove Consuelo from Venice and from the count's attentions, and seek fortune with her elsewhere, or to abandon her to his rival, and go off himself to strive for a success which she would not overshadow. In this state of doubt, which grew more and more painful, instead of seeking repose in the society of his true friend, he plunged again into the storm by returning to Corilla, who increased his apprehensions by showing him more clearly than at first the disadvantageous side of his position.

“ ‘A prophet is not without honor save in his own country,’ ” she said to him, “and in any case you would not be well off in your native city, where you have been seen running ragged about the streets, and where any one can say (and Heaven knows how the nobles love to boast of their benefactions to artists, even though they are imaginary !), ‘I was his protector ; I first discovered his talent ; I recommended him to this one, or preferred him to that one.’ You have lived too much in the light, my poor Anzoleto. Your charming face struck every one who saw it before they knew you had a future. How can you expect to dazzle people who have seen you rowing their gondolas and singing Tasso’s verses the while to gain a few pence, or running their errands to earn your supper? Consuelo, who is ugly and has led a retired life, is a foreign marvel to them. Besides, she is a Spaniard, and her accent is not Venetian. Her beautiful, though somewhat strange, pronunciation would please them, even if she were detestable, for it is something with which their ears are not surfeited. Your beauty gained three-fourths of your little success in the first act, and by the last they were already accustomed to it.”

“And you might add that the fine scratch you gave me, and for which I ought never to forgive you, did not a little to deprive me of this last, though trifling, advantage.”

“Trifling in the eyes of men, but important in those of women. With the help of the latter, you

may triumph in drawing-rooms, but without the former, you will fail on the stage. And how can you expect to win them when your rival is a woman, who not only conquers the serious dilettanti, but who intoxicates by her grace and the prestige of her sex all the men who are not judges of music? Ah, what talent and knowledge have been necessary to Stefanini, to Saverio, and to all those who have appeared upon the stage with me !”

“In that case, dear Corilla, I should run as great a risk in appearing with you as with Consuelo. If I should take a fancy to go to France with you, that would be a wholesome warning.”

This remark was a revelation to Corilla. She saw that her random shot had struck home, since the idea of leaving Venice was already taking shape in Anzoleto's mind. As soon as she conceived a hope of carrying him with her, she spared no pains to make the project attractive to him. She depreciated herself as much as she could, and set herself below her rival with boundless modesty. She was even willing to say that she was neither beautiful enough nor sufficiently a great singer to arouse the passion of the public. And since she spoke more truly in this than she thought, as Anzoleto knew quite well, and since he had never deceived himself about the immense superiority of Consuelo, she had little trouble in persuading him. Consequently, their partnership and their departure were pretty well decided upon at this interview. Anzoleto thought of it seriously, although he

carefully kept open a way of escape from the arrangement, if need should be.

Corilla, seeing that he still preserved a trace of uncertainty, urged him strenuously to continue his debut, flattering him with the hope of a greater success at the other performances, but quite sure in her heart that the disastrous result of these trials would disgust him with Venice and with Consuelo.

When he left Corilla, he went to visit his friend. An irresistible need of seeing her impelled him. It was the first time for years that he had ended and begun a day without her chaste kiss upon his brow. But as he would have blushed for his fickleness, after what had happened with Corilla, he strove to persuade himself that he was going to seek proof of her faithlessness. "Without any doubt," he said to himself, "the count will have taken advantage of the opportunity and the irritation caused by my absence." But the mere idea called great drops to his brow. If it was true, the certainty of Consuelo's remorse and regret would break his heart, and he hastened his steps, expecting to find her bathed in tears. Yet an inward voice, stronger than all else, told him that so swift and shameful a fall was impossible for so pure and noble a being, and he stayed his pace as he thought of himself, of the hatefulness of his conduct, of the selfishness of his ambition, and of the falsehood and remorse with which he was loading his life and his conscience.

He found Consuelo in her black gown, seated

before her table, as serene and pure in her attitude and look as she had always been. She ran to him with her usual expansiveness and questioned him anxiously, but without reproach and without distrust, concerning his absence.

"I have not been well," he replied, with profound dejection, caused by his inward humiliation. "When I struck my head against the scene last night, the blow, which I told you was nothing, brought on so severe a headache that I had to leave the Zustiniani palace, and I have been in bed all morning with it."

"O heavens!" cried Consuelo, kissing the wound made by her rival, "you have been suffering, and are still in pain?"

"No; my rest has done me good. Never mind about it, and tell me how you managed to get home all alone last night?"

"Alone? Oh, no! The count brought me back in his gondola."

"Ah! I was sure of it," said Anzoleto, in a strange voice. "And he said all sorts of pretty things to you in this tete-a-tete?"

"What more could he say than he has already said in public a hundred times? He spoils me, and would make me vain, if I were not on my guard against that. Besides, it was not a tete-a-tete; my good master wished to accompany me, too. Ah, what a true friend he is!"

"What master? what true friend?" asked Anzoleto, reassured and already preoccupied.

"Porpora, of course! What are you thinking about?"

"I was thinking about your triumph last night, dear Consuelo. Have not you thought of it?"

"Less than of yours, I assure you."

"Mine? Ah, do not mock me, dear friend! Mine was so pale that it was very like a failure."

Consuelo changed color with surprise. In spite of her remarkable self-control, she had not been cool enough to perceive the difference between the applause which had greeted her and that which her lover had received. There is an excitement in ovations of this sort from which the most self-possessed artists cannot escape, and which sometimes causes them to mistake the support of a cabal for the clamor of success. But, instead of over-estimating the admiration of her public, Consuelo, frightened by so terrible a noise, could hardly understand it, and had not perceived that she was preferred to Anzoletto. She scolded him naively for his dissatisfaction with his success, and seeing that she could neither persuade him nor drive away his sadness, she reproached him gently for his excessive thirst for glory, and for valuing too highly the approval of the public.

"I have always told you," she said, "that you cared more for the results of art than for art itself. When one has done one's best, when one feels that one has done well, it seems to me that a little applause, more or less, can neither add to nor take from one's inward satisfaction. Do you remember what Porpora told

me the first time that I sang at the Zustiniani palace? 'Whoever is filled with a true love for his art can never fear anything.'"

"You and your Porpora," replied Anzoletto irritably, "are all very well, with your fine maxims. Nothing is so easy as to philosophize on the ills of life when one knows only its bright side. Porpora, although he is poor, and his merits are disputed, has still a great reputation. He has gathered so many laurels that his old head may grow white in their shade. You, who know that you are invincible, can feel no fear. You leap to the top of the ladder at the first bound, and you reproach those who are not so strong as you for being giddy. It is not very charitable, Consuelo, and it is supremely unjust. And then, your argument does not apply to me. You say that we ought to despise the approval of the public as long as we have our own. But suppose I have not this inward consciousness of having done well? Do you not see that I am horribly dissatisfied with myself? Did you not see that I was detestable? Did you not hear that I sang pitifully?"

"No, that is not true. You were neither better nor worse than usual. The nervousness which you felt hardly interfered with your powers. Besides, it quickly left you, and what you knew well, you did well."

"And what did I not know well?" said Anzoletto, fixing on her his great eyes, hollow from fatigue and chagrin.

She sighed and was silent for a moment, and then said, kissing him,—

“What you do not know, you must learn. If you had been willing to study seriously during the rehearsals—did I not tell you? But this is not the time for reproaches, but, on the contrary, the time to repair everything. Come, let us take only two hours a day, and you will see how quickly you overcome what now hinders you.”

“Can I do it in a day?”

“You can do it in a few months, at the outside.”

“And yet I sing to-morrow! I have to go on with my appearances before a public which will judge me by my faults far more than by my merits.”

“But it will quickly perceive your improvement.”

“Who knows? Suppose it takes a dislike to me?”

“It has shown you the contrary.”

“Ah! you think it was indulgent to me?”

“Well, yes, it was, my friend. Where you were weak, it was kindly; where you were strong, it gave you credit.”

“But, meanwhile, they will give me a wretched engagement.”

“The count is generous in everything, and never spares money. Besides, do they not offer me more than we both need to live handsomely?”

“That is it! I am to live on your success!”

“Have I not lived long enough on your favor?”

"It is not a question of money. I care little how small my salary is. But he will engage me for the second or third roles."

"He has no other first tenor available. He has long counted on you and thought only of you. Besides, he is wholly disposed in your favor. You said that he would be opposed to our marriage. Far from that, he seems to desire it, and often asks me when I shall invite him to our wedding."

"Ah, indeed! That is good. A thousand thanks, my lord count!"

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing; only, Consuelo, you were very wrong not to prevent my appearing until I had, by careful study, corrected my faults, which you know so well. For you do know my faults, I repeat."

"Have I been lacking in frankness? Have I not often warned you? But you have always insisted that the public knew nothing; and when I heard what a success you won the night you first sang in the count's drawing-room, I thought"—

"That the world of society knew no more than the common public?"

"I thought that your good qualities made more impression than your faults; and it has proved as true of the one as of the other, it seems to me."

"It is true," thought Anzoletto, "she speaks truth; and if I could postpone my appearance—but I should run the risk of having another tenor called in my place, who might not yield to me later. Come," said

he, after walking across the room several times, "what are my faults?"

"Those that I have often told you of, — too much boldness and not enough of preparation, an energy which is rather feverish than real, dramatic effects which are the result rather of your will than of your heart. You are not filled with the spirit of your part as a whole. You learn it in fragments, and see in it only a succession of more or less brilliant numbers. You do not grasp either the gradation, the development or the result. In haste to show your beautiful voice and the skill which you have in certain respects, you revealed all that was in you almost as soon as you came on the stage. You strove for an effect at the least chance, and all your effects were alike. At the end of the first act, they knew you by heart; but they did not know that it was all, and they expected something prodigious at the end. That something was not in you. Your emotion was exhausted and your voice no longer fresh. You felt it, and you forced both voice and emotion. The public felt it, and remained unmoved, to your great surprise, when you thought yourself most pathetic. The trouble was that they saw, not an artist inspired by passion, but an actor determined on success."

"And how is it with others?" cried Anzoletto, stamping his foot. "Have I not heard them, — all those that have been applauded in Venice these ten years? Did not old Stefanini shout when his voice gave out? And did not they applaud him furiously?"

"It is true, and I always wondered how the public could be so mistaken. No doubt they remembered the time when he had more power, and did not like to make him feel the misfortune of old age."

"And Corilla, too, that idol you have overthrown, did not she force situations? Did she not make efforts which it was painful to see and to hear? Was she really impassioned when they applauded her to the skies?"

"It is because I thought her methods artificial, her effects detestable, and her singing and her acting both devoid of taste and breadth, that I appeared on the stage so calmly, persuaded, as you were, that the public did not know much about it."

"Ah," said Anzoletto, with a deep sigh, "you lay your finger on my wound, poor Consuelo!"

"How so, my well-beloved?"

"How so, do you ask? We were both mistaken, Consuelo. The public does know. Its heart teaches it what its ignorance would conceal. It is a great child which must have amusement and emotion. It is satisfied with what is offered it; but if something better is given, it compares and understands. Corilla could still charm it last week, although she sang false and was short of breath. But you appear, and Corilla is ruined; she is crushed and buried. If she were to appear again, she would be hissed. If I had made my debut beside her, I should have had as complete a success as I had at the count's the first time I sang after her. But beside you, I was eclipsed. It had

to be thus, and it always will be thus. The public liked tinsel. It mistook paste for jewels, and was dazzled. It is shown a fine gem, and at once it cannot understand how it could have been so grossly deceived. It can no longer bear imitation jewels, and it sees through them. That is my misfortune, Consuelo, it is to have been brought forward, a bit of Venetian glass, beside a pearl from the depths of the sea."

Consuelo did not understand all the bitterness and truth there was in these reflections. She set them down to the love of her betrothed, and did not reply to what she took for flattery save by smiles and caresses. She pretended that he would surpass her whenever he would take the trouble, and revived his courage by persuading him that nothing was easier than to sing as she did. She was quite sincere in this, for she had never been hindered by any obstacle, and she did not know that labor itself is the very first obstacle for those who do not love it and are not persevering.

CHAPTER XIX.

ENCOURAGED by the frankness of Consuelo and the perfidy of Corilla, who urged him to appear again, Anzoleto began to work earnestly, and at the second representation of "*Ipermnestra*" he sang his first act much more purely. The public was grateful for it. But as Consuelo's success increased in equal proportion, he was not satisfied with his own, and began to be demoralized by this new proof of his inferiority. From that moment, everything put on a sinister appearance. It seemed to him that the audience did not listen to him, that the spectators seated near him were whispering scornful criticisms, and that the kindly amateurs who encouraged him behind the scenes were pitying him profoundly. All their praises had for him two meanings, the worst of which he took to himself. Corilla, whom he went to consult in her box between the acts, pretended to be frightened, and asked him if he was not ill.

"Why?" he said impatiently.

"Because your voice is muffled to-day, and you seemed tired. Take courage, dear Anzoleto! give full scope to your powers, which are paralyzed by fear or discouragement."

"Did I not sing my first air well?"

"Not nearly so well as the first time. I was so disturbed by it that I was almost ill."

"But still they applauded me."

"Alas! — but never mind; I am wrong to destroy your illusions. Go on. Only, try to give your voice more brilliancy."

"Consuelo," he thought, "intended to give me good advice. She acts from instinct, and is successful. But where could she have gained enough experience to teach me how to master this unfavorable public? By following her directions, I lose my advantages, and they do not give me credit for the improvement in my method. Come, let us go back to our former boldness! Did I not prove at my debut at the count's that I could dazzle those whom I could not persuade? Did not old Porpora tell me that I had the faults of genius? Let the public pass over the faults and bow to the genius!"

He strained his lungs, performed prodigies in the second act, and was listened to with surprise. A few clapped their hands, but others silenced the applause. The mass of the public asked itself whether this was sublime or detestable.

With a little more boldness, Anzoletto might, perhaps, have won the day. But this check disturbed him so much that he lost his head, and failed shamefully in all the rest of his part.

At the third performance, he had recovered his courage, and, resolving to follow his own ideas without listening to Consuelo's advice, he ventured on the strangest caprices and the most impertinent innovations. O horror! two or three hisses broke

the silence with which these desperate efforts were received. The good and generous public silenced the hisses and began to applaud, but there was no mistaking this good-will towards the person and blame of the artist. Anzoletto tore his costume when he returned to his dressing-room, and as soon as the piece was finished he went and shut himself up with Corilla, filled with bitter rage, and determined to fly with her to the end of the earth.

Three days went by without his seeing Consuelo. It was not hatred that he felt for her, nor coldness (at the bottom of his remorse-laden heart he still loved her, and suffered mortally at not seeing her), but a real terror. He felt the domination of this being who crushed the public with her grandeur, and who in secret took possession of his confidence and his will as she chose. In his agitation, he had not the strength to conceal from Corilla how much he was attached to his noble betrothed, and how much control she still had over his convictions. This filled Corilla with bitter rage, which she concealed. She condoled with him, and drew the whole truth from him; and when she knew the secret of his jealousy, she struck a master-stroke by secretly informing Zustiniani of her own intimacy with Anzoletto, being sure that the count would not lose so fine an occasion of enlightening the object of his desires, and thus making Anzoletto's return to her impossible.

Surprised at seeing a whole day go by in the solitude of her garret, Consuelo became anxious; and

after two days of vain waiting and mortal anguish, as night fell she wrapped herself up in a thick mantle (for the famous cantatrice was no longer protected by her obscurity against slanderous tongues) and hurried to the house where Anzoleto had lived for some weeks, in lodgings more suitable than the old ones, and which the count had given him in one of the numerous houses which he owned in the city. She did not find him at home, and learned that he rarely spent the night there.

This circumstance did not enlighten her. She knew his habits of poetic wandering, and thought that, unable to become accustomed to this splendid dwelling, he had returned to one of his old haunts. She was about to venture in search of him, when, as she turned about to go out, she found herself face to face with Porpora.

"Consuelo," he said, in a low voice, "it is useless to hide your face from me. I have heard your voice. What are you doing here at this hour, my poor child, and whom are you seeking in this house?"

"I am seeking my betrothed," replied Consuelo, taking her old master's arm, "and I do not know why I should blush to own it to my best friend. I know that you do not approve of my love for him, but I could not lie to you. I am uneasy. I have not seen Anzoleto since the day before yesterday, at the theatre. I am afraid he is ill."

"Ill? He!" said the professor, shrugging his shoulders. "Come with me, poor girl, I must speak

to you. And since you have made up your mind to open your heart to me, I must open mine to you, also. Take my arm ; we can talk as we go. Listen, Consuelo, and understand well what I am going to say. You can not, you must not, be the wife of this young man. I forbid it in the name of the living God, who has given me a father's heart for you."

"Oh, my master !" she replied, sorrowfully, "ask me the sacrifice of my life, but not that of my love."

"I do not ask it, I demand it," replied Porpora, firmly. "This lover is accursed. He will be a torment and a shame to you if you do not give him up at once."

"Dear master," she said, with a sad and gentle smile, "you have often told me that, but I have tried in vain to obey you. You hate this poor child. You do not know him, and I am sure that you will change your mind about him."

"Consuelo," said the maestro, more forcibly, "I have made vain objections and useless warnings, I know. I spoke to you as an artist to an artist, and I saw only an artist in your betrothed. To-day I speak as a man of a man, and I speak to you as a woman. This woman has given her love badly, that man is unworthy of it, and he who tells you so is certain."

"O God ! Anzoletto unworthy of my love ? He, my only love, my protector, my brother ? Ah, you do not know how he has helped me, and how he has respected me all my life ! I must tell you !"

Then Consuelo told the tale of her life and of her love, which were but one. Porpora was moved, but not shaken.

"In all this," he said, "I see nothing but your innocence, your fidelity, your virtue. As for him, I see the need that he has had of your society and your teaching, to which, whatever you may think, I know that he owes what little he has learned, what little he is worth. But none the less is it true that this lover, so chaste and so pure, is the sport of all the lost women of Venice!"

"Take care what you say!" replied Consuelo in a stifled voice; "I am accustomed to believe in you as in God, my master! But in what concerns Anzoletto, I am determined to close my ears and my heart against you. Ah, let me leave you!" she said, trying to remove her arm from his; "you are killing me!"

"I wish to kill your fatal passion, and by the truth to restore you to life," he said, pressing her arm against his generous and indignant breast. "I know that I am rough, Consuelo. I know not how to be otherwise; and it is because of that that I have put off as long as I could the blow I have to give you. I hoped that you would open your eyes, that you would understand what is going on about you; but instead of learning by experience, you are plunging blindly into the abyss. I cannot let you fall! You are the only creature that I have esteemed for ten years. You shall not perish — no, you shall not!"

"But, my friend, I am not in danger. Do you

think that I am lying when I swear to you by all that is holy, that I have kept the oath I took at my mother's death-bed? Anzoleto has kept it, too. I am not his wife yet, but I am not his mistress."

"But if he says a word, you will be the one or the other."

"My mother herself made us promise it."

"And yet you were coming this evening to find this man who will not and can not be your husband?"

"Who told you so?"

"Would Corilla ever permit him" —

"Corilla? What has he to do with Corilla?"

"We are only a step from her house — you are looking for your betrothed — let us go find him there! Do you feel brave enough?"

"No, no! a thousand times, no!" replied Consuelo, staggering and leaning against the wall. "Leave me my life, my master! Do not kill me before I have lived! I tell you that you are killing me."

"You must drink of this cup," said the inexorable old man. "I fill here the role of fate. Having only made people ungrateful and consequently unhappy by my tenderness and kindness, I must tell the truth to those I love. It is the only good that can be done by a heart dried up by misfortune and hardened by suffering. I pity you, my poor girl, for not having a more tender and humane friend to support you in this dreadful crisis. But as I am, must I deal with others, and reveal by a flash of lightning, since I cannot vivify

by sunlight. Therefore, Consuelo, let there be no weakness between us. Come to this palace. I wish you to surprise your betrothed in Corilla's arms. If you cannot walk, I will drag you. If you fall, I will carry you. Ah ! old Porpora is still strong when the fire of divine anger burns in his veins !”

“Mercy, mercy !” cried Consuelo, more pale than death. “Let me still doubt ! Give me one day, — one day more to believe in him ! I am not ready for this torture” —

“No, not a day, not an hour !” he replied in an inflexible tone ; “for I shall never find again this hour to lay the truth before your eyes ; and the infamous wretch would employ the day for which you ask to place you again beneath the yoke of his falsehood. You shall come with me — I command it !”

“Yes, I will go with you !” said Consuelo, recovering her strength by a violent revulsion of love. “I will go with you to prove your injustice and the truth of my betrothed ; for you are outrageously mistaken, and you wish me to be mistaken with you ! Go on, then, butcher that you are ! I follow you, and fear nothing !”

Porpora took her at her word, and, seizing her arm in his iron grasp, drew her into the house in which he lived. After leading her through passages and up stairways, he brought her out on an upper terrace, from which Corilla's palace could be seen. It was dark from top to bottom, except for a single window, which seemed to be invisible from all points. A bal-

cony shut it out from beneath, there was nothing on a level, and above it, only the roof of Porpora's house, which faced so that it did not appear that any one could look from it into the cantatrice's palace. But Corilla did not know that there was a recess in the angle of this roof, a sort of niche in mid-air, where the maestro came nightly, from an artistic caprice, to escape from his fellow-men, to gaze at the stars, and to ponder over sacred and dramatic themes. Chance had thus made him discover the mystery of Anzoletto's love affair, and Consuelo had only to look in the direction in which he pointed to see her betrothed in the arms of her rival. She turned away quickly, and Porpora, who, fearing the dizziness of despair, had held her with superhuman strength, led her below, and brought her into his study, whose door and window he closed, that he might bury in mystery the explosion which he foresaw.

CHAPTER XX.

BUT there was no explosion. Consuelo remained silent and crushed. Porpora spoke to her. She did not reply, but motioned to him not to question her. Then she rose, went to the clavichord and drained a pitcher of iced water which stood upon it, and then sat down before the master without a word.

The stern old man could not comprehend the depth of her suffering.

"Well," he said, "did I deceive you? What do you intend to do now?"

A painful shudder shook the statue, and after passing her hand over her brow, she said, "I do not intend to do anything until I can understand what has happened to me."

"And what is there left to understand?"

"Everything! For I can understand nothing, and I am trying in vain to find a cause for my misfortune. What have I done to Anzoletto that he no longer loves me? What fault have I committed to render me contemptible in his eyes? You cannot tell me, for I, who can read my own conscience, see nothing there which gives me the key to this mystery. Oh, it is an inconceivable marvel! My mother believed in the power of philters; is Corilla a witch?"

"Poor child!" said the maestro, "there is, indeed,

a magician here, but it is called Vanity, and a poison, but it is called Envy. Corilla could pour it out, but it was not she who made his heart so ready to receive it. There was poison already in Anzoletto's veins. One dose more has made a traitor of him, from the deceiver that he always was ; he has always been ungrateful ; it made him unfaithful."

"What vanity? what envy?"

"Vanity to surpass all others, envy at being surpassed by you."

"Is it possible? Can a man be jealous of a woman's advantages? Can a lover hate the success of her he loves? There seem to be many things which I do not know and cannot understand."

"You never will ; but you will see them every hour of your life. You will know that a man can be jealous of the advantages of a woman when that man is a vain artist, and that a lover can hate the success of her he loves when the world they live in is the stage. For an actor is not a man, Consuelo, he is a woman. He only lives upon a sickly vanity ; he works only to get drunk upon vanity. A woman's beauty injures him. A woman's talent eclipses or rivals his own. A woman is his rival, or rather he is the rival of a woman. He has all the meannesses, all the caprices, all the exaction, all the absurdities, of a coquette. That is the character of most actors. There are great exceptions, but they are so rare, so praiseworthy, that one should bow before them and honor them more than the greatest philosophers. Anzoletto is not

an exception ; he is simply the vainest of the vain. There lies all the secret of his conduct."

"But what an incomprehensible revenge ! How poor and insufficient ! In what way can Corilla compensate him for his failure with the public ? If he had told me frankly of his suffering (ah, it needed only a word for that !) I should have understood him, perhaps ; at any rate, I should have felt sorry for him, and I should have given way to make room for him."

"It is the nature of envious souls to hate people in proportion to the happiness of which they rob them. And it is the nature of love, alas ! to hate the pleasures which it does not procure for the person loved. While your lover hates the public which covers you with glory, do you not hate the rival who now makes him happy ?"


"No, I do not ; and you prove to me that it would be unworthy and shameful to do so."

"Well, it is not revenge and hatred with which I wished to fill your breast, but calmness and indifference. The character of this man dictates the actions of his life. You can never change him. Make up your mind to it, and think of yourself."

"Of myself ? That is, of myself alone ? Alone, without hope and without a lover ?"

"Think of music, the divine art, Consuelo. Dare you say that you love it only for Anzoletto's sake ?"

"I have loved the art for its own sake, too, but I have never separated in my mind those two indivisible



things — my life and Anzoleto's. And I do not see what part of me will be left to love anything, when the necessary half of my life has been taken away."

"Anzoleto was only an idea for you, and that idea gave you life. You will replace him by another idea, grander, purer, more vivifying. Your soul, your genius, your whole being, will no longer be at the mercy of a fragile, deceitful form. You will see the sublime ideal, freed from this earthly veil. You will wing your flight into heaven, and live in sacred wedlock with God himself."

"You wish me to become a nun, as you advised me formerly?"

"No; that would be to limit the exercise of your artistic faculties to a single school, and you should embrace them all. Whatever you do or wherever you are, on the stage as in the cloister, you can be a saint, a heavenly virgin, the betrothed of a sacred ideal."

"What you say presents a sublime thought, enveloped in mysterious figures. Let me go home, my master. I need to collect and to study myself."

"That is it, Consuelo; you need to know yourself. Thus far you have under-estimated yourself, and given your heart and your future to one who is your inferior in every respect. You have mistaken your destiny, because you have not seen that you were born without an equal, and consequently without any possible companion in this world. You need absolute solitude and liberty. I would have for you neither husband nor family, nor passions nor ties of any sort. It is

thus that I have always thought of your life and understood your future. The day that you give yourself to a mortal, you will lose your divinity. Ah, if only Mingotti or Molteni, my illustrious pupils, my mighty creations, had been willing to listen to me, they would have lived without rivals ! But woman is weak and inquisitive ; vanity blinds her, vain desires agitate her, a fancy carries her away. They satisfied their curiosity — but what did they receive in return ? Storms, weariness, the loss or the deterioration of their genius ! Would you not be more than they, Consuelo ? Will you not have an ambition superior to all the false needs of this life ? Will you not drive out the vain longings of your heart, that you may grasp the noblest crown that genius has ever had for an aureole ? ”

Porpora went on speaking for a long while, but with an energy and an eloquence which I could never reproduce. Consuelo listened with her head bent and her eyes fixed on the ground. When he had finished, she replied, “ Master, your ideas are exalted, but I am not great enough to understand you. It seems to me that you outrage human nature by proscribing its noblest passions. It seems to me that you would stifle the instincts which God himself has given us, to deify a monstrous and cruel selfishness. Perhaps I should comprehend you better if I were a better Christian. I will try to become one ; that is all I can promise you.”

She rose, calm in appearance, but inwardly a prey to frightful agitation. The great and austere artist

accompanied her home, urging his views upon her, without being able to convince her. Nevertheless, he did her good by opening before her mind a vast field of deep and serious meditations, amid which Anzoletto's crime appeared but as a single fact, serving as a sad but solemn introduction to endless reveries. She passed hours in praying, weeping and reflecting, and then went to sleep, full of the consciousness of her own virtue and of trust in a merciful and protecting God.

The next day Porpora came to tell her that there would be a rehearsal of "*Ipermestra*" for Stefanini, who was to take the tenor's part. Anzoletto was ill in bed, and complained that he had lost his voice. Consuelo's first thought was to hurry to him to take care of him.

"You may save yourself the trouble," said Porpora; "he is perfectly well, as the theatre's physician knows, and he will, no doubt, go to see Corilla this evening. But Count Zustiniani, who understood very well what it all meant, and who consents to the postponement of his appearance without much regret, forbade the doctor to unmask the deception, and has begged Stefanini to return to the stage for a few days."

"But, good heavens! what does Anzoletto intend to do? Is he so discouraged that he intends to leave the stage?"

"Yes, the stage of San-Samuel. He is going to France with Corilla within a month. Does that surprise you? He is fleeing from under the shadow

which you cast upon him. He is placing his fate in the hands of a less dangerous woman, whom he will betray in her turn when he no longer needs her."

Consuelo turned pale and placed her hand over her breaking heart. Perhaps she had hoped to bring Anzoletto back by reproaching him gently with his fault, and by offering to postpone her own appearance. This news was the cruelest blow of all to her, and she could not realize that she would never again see him whom she had so dearly loved.

"Ah, it is all a bad dream," she exclaimed; "I must go and find him, and have him explain it to me. He must not go away with this woman; it would be his ruin. I cannot let him do it. I will make him perceive his real interest, if it is true that he no longer cares for anything else. Come with me, dear master, let us not give him up thus!"

"I will give you up, and forever," cried the indignant Porpora, "if you are guilty of so cowardly an act! You, to implore this wretch, and to strive for him with such a creature as Corilla. Ah! St. Cecilia, beware of your Bohemian blood, and try to get the better of your blind and vagabond instincts! Come, follow me! They are waiting for you to rehearse. You will, in spite of yourself, have a certain pleasure this evening in singing with a master like Stefanini. You will meet a learned, modest and generous artist."

He dragged her to the theatre, and then, for the first time, she felt the horror of an artist's life, bound to the will of the public, compelled to stifle

her feelings and to trample her emotions under foot, that she might give expression to the feelings and emotions of another. The rehearsal, then her toilet, and finally the performance, were an atrocious torture to her. Two days later she had to appear in a comic opera by Galuppi, "*Arcifanfano, re de' matti.*" The work had been chosen to please Stefanini, who was very droll in it. Consuelo was compelled to struggle to make those laugh whom she had but lately made weep. She was brilliant, charming, amusing in the highest degree, with death in her soul. Two or three times sobs rose from her heart to her throat, and passed off in forced gayety which would have been frightful to any one who could have understood it. When she returned to her dressing-room she fell in convulsions. The public wished to see her again to applaud her, and when she delayed, made a frightful noise; they threatened to break the benches and scale the stage. Stefanini went and fetched her, half-dressed, with her hair in disorder, and pale as a ghost. She allowed herself to be dragged upon the stage, and, overwhelmed with an avalanche of flowers, she was obliged to stoop down and pick up a crown of laurels.

"Ah, the wild beasts!" she murmured, as she went behind the scene.

"My child," said the old singer, "you are suffering greatly; but these little things," he added, handing a bunch of flowers which he had picked up for her, "are a powerful specific for all our ills. You

will become accustomed to it, and the time will come when you will never remember your ailments or your fatigue unless they forget to crown you."

"Oh, how vain and small they are!" thought poor Consuelo.

When she returned to her dressing-room, she fainted literally on a bed of flowers, which they had gathered on the stage and thrown pell-mell on the sofa. The dresser hurried out to call a physician. Count Zustiniani remained alone for a few moments with the beautiful singer, who lay pale and crushed as the jasmines which bestrewed her couch. In this moment of anxiety and excitement, Zustiniani lost his head, and yielded to a mad impulse to recall her to herself by caresses. But his first kiss was hateful to the pure lips of Consuelo. She recovered sufficiently to repel it as if it had been the bite of a serpent.

"Ah, far from me," she said, writhing in a sort of delirium — "far from me love and caresses and soft words! No love, no husband, no lover, no family! My master has said it! Liberty, the ideal, solitude, glory!"

She burst into such heart-rending sobs that the count was frightened and threw himself on his knees beside her to try to calm her. But he could say nothing helpful to this wounded soul, and his passion, which had reached its highest paroxysm, found expression in spite of him. He understood only too well the despair of betrayed love. He gave voice to the enthusiasm of a lover who hopes. Consuelo

seemed to listen to him, and mechanically withdrew her hand from his with a vague smile which he took for a faint encouragement. Some men, who are full of tact and penetration in society, are ridiculous in such situations. The physician arrived, and administered a sedative. Then Consuelo was wrapped in her cloak and carried to her gondola. The count went with her, supporting her in his arms, and still speaking of his love, and that with a certain eloquence which he thought must carry conviction. After a quarter of an hour, getting no reply, he begged for a word, a look.

"To what must I reply?" asked Consuelo, as if awakening from a dream.

Zustiniani was discouraged at first, but he thought that he would never find a better opportunity, and that this wounded heart would be more accessible than after reflection and reason had returned to her. So he spoke on, and found the same silence, the same preoccupation, only with a sort of instinctive effort to repel his caresses. When the gondola landed, he tried to detain Consuelo for a moment, to obtain a word of encouragement.

"Ah, lord count," said she, with gentle coldness, "pardon my weakness. I have not heard all, but I understand. Oh, yes, I understand perfectly! I ask only the night to reflect, to recover from my emotion. To-morrow, — yes, to-morrow, I will answer you frankly."

"To-morrow, dear Consuelo? It is an age; but

I submit if you allow me to hope that at least my friendship" —

"Oh, yes, yes ! you may hope !" said Consuelo, in a strange tone, as she stepped ashore ; "but do not follow me," she said, with an imperious gesture, "if you do, you can hope no more !"

Shame and indignation had given her back her strength ; but it was a nervous, feverish strength, which vanished in a frightful, sardonic laugh as she went up the stairs.

"You are very happy, Consuelo," said, out of the darkness, a voice which almost stunned her. "Let me congratulate you on your gayety !"

"Ah, yes," she said, as she seized Anzoleto's arm violently, and hurried on to her room with him, "I thank you, Anzoleto ; you are right to congratulate me, for I am truly happy ; oh, altogether happy !"

Anzoleto had already lighted the lamp. When the bluish light fell upon their distorted features, they were frightened at one another.

"We are very happy, are we not, Anzoleto?" she asked, bitterly, while her face was contorted by a smile which ended in a flood of tears. "What do you think of our happiness?"

"I think, Consuelo," he replied, with a hard smile and dry eyes, "that we have had some trouble in making up our minds to it, but that we shall become accustomed to it in the end."

"You seemed to me quite accustomed to Corilla's boudoir."

"And it appears to me that you are quite at home in the count's gondola."

"The count? Then you knew that the count wished to make me his mistress?"

"It was that I might not interfere with you that I discreetly kept in the background."

"Ah, you knew it? And you chose that very time to abandon me?"

"Did I not do wisely, and are you not satisfied with your lot? The count is magnificently generous, and a poor, unsuccessful debutant could never cope with him."

"Porpora was right ; you are an infamous creature ! Out of my room ! You do not deserve that I should justify myself, and I should defile myself by a regret for you ! Out, I say ! But first know that you can return to San-Samuel with Corilla. Never again will my mother's daughter set foot on those vile boards which they call a stage !"

"Then the daughter of your mother the zingara is to play fine lady in Zustiniani's villa on the shores of the Brenta? It will be a noble life, and I rejoice at it !"

"Oh, my mother !" said Consuelo, turning to the bed and falling on her knees beside it, with her face pressed to the coverlet which had been the zingara's winding-sheet.

Anzoleto was terrified and shocked by this energetic movement and the terrible sobs which rose from Consuelo's breast. Remorse was knocking loudly at

his own, and he went to his friend, to take her in his arms and raise her up. But she rose of herself, and pushing him away with wild strength, she forced him out of the door, crying, "Out of my room, out of my heart, out of my memory, forever! Farewell, farewell!"

Anzoleto had come to seek her with an atrociously selfish motive, yet it was the best thought that he could have had. He had not felt brave enough to leave her, and he had found a middle course, which was to tell her that her honor was threatened by Zustiniani's designs, and thus remove her from the theatre. This resolution was a homage to the pride and purity of Consuelo. He knew that she was incapable of remaining in a compromising situation, or of accepting a protection for which she would have to blush. In his guilty and corrupted heart there was still an unshakable faith in her innocence, and he expected to find her as chaste, as faithful, and as devoted as he had left her a few days before. But how reconcile this adoration of her with the settled design of deceiving her, and remaining her friend, her betrothed, without breaking with Corilla? Her he wished to return to the stage with him, and he could not think of leaving her at the moment his success would depend wholly on her. Yet still this bold but cowardly plan had taken shape in his brain, and he had treated Consuelo as Italian women treat their Madonnas, whose protection they implore in the hour of repentance, but whose faces they veil in the hour of guilt.

When he saw her at the theatre, so brilliant and apparently so gay in her comic role, he began to fear that he had lost too much time in carrying out his plan. When he saw her return in the count's gondola, and come in with a convulsive laugh, not understanding the distress of this distracted heart, he thought that he was too late, and his rage got the better of him. But when he saw her repel his insults and drive him away with contempt, he was seized with mingled respect and dread, and he waited near for a long while, hoping that she would call him back. He even ventured to knock and implore her pardon through the closed door. But a profound silence reigned in this room, whose threshold he was never to cross again in Consuelo's company. He went away, confused and angry, determined to return on the morrow, and flattering himself that he would be better received. "After all," he thought, "my plan must succeed. She knows of the count's love, and the work is half done."

Overwhelmed with fatigue, he slept late, and in the afternoon went to visit Corilla.

"Great news!" she said, holding out her arms to him, "Consuelo is gone!"

"Gone? with whom, great heavens! where?"

"To Vienna, where Porpora has sent her to wait for him. She has deceived us all, the little cheat! She was engaged for the emperor's theatre, where Porpora is to bring out his new opera."

"Gone! gone without a word to me!" cried Anzoletto, hurrying to the door.

"Oh, you need not look for her in Venice!" said Corilla, with an evil laugh and a look of triumph, "she embarked for Palestrina at daybreak, and is already a long way on the mainland. Zustiniani, who thought she loved him, and was deceived, is furious. He is in bed with a fever. But he has just sent me Porpora, to beg me to sing this evening, and Stefanini, who is tired of the theatre and anxious to go and enjoy his well-earned repose in his country-house, is eager to have you go on with your performances. So be ready to sing 'Ipermnestra' to-morrow night. I am going to rehearsal; they are waiting for me. If you do not believe me, you can take a turn in the city and convince yourself."

"Ah, you fury!" cried Anzoletto, "you have won, but you have destroyed my life!"

And he fell fainting to the floor.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE person most embarrassed by Consuelo's flight was Count Zustiniani. After causing all Venice to say and believe that the marvellous singer was his favorite, how was he to explain in a manner flattering to his vanity the fact that at his first words of love she had escaped swiftly and mysteriously from his hopes and desires? It was thought by some that, jealous of his treasure, he had hidden her in one of his country-houses. But when Porpora told, with his well-known truthfulness, how his pupil had determined to go and wait for him in Germany, nothing was left but to seek the motive of this strange resolution. To deceive the public, Count Zustiniani pretended to be neither angry nor surprised; but his annoyance was evident in spite of himself, and people ceased to credit him with a good fortune for which he had been so much envied. The greater part of the truth became clear to every one; that is to say, Anzoleto's faithlessness, Corilla's rivalry, and the despair of the poor Spaniard, whom they began to pity and regret.

Anzoleto's first impulse was to rush to Porpora; but the old man sternly repulsed him.

"Cease to question me," the indignant master had replied; "heartless, faithless, ambitious as you are, you never deserved the love of this noble girl, and

you shall never learn from me where she has gone. I will do my best to prevent your getting on her track, and I hope that if you meet her some day by chance; your image will be completely effaced from her heart and her memory."

From Porpora's house, Anzoleto went to the Corte Minelli. He found Consuelo's room already given up to a new occupant, and littered with materials of his trade. He was a glass-blower who had long lived in the house, and who was gayly moving in his tools.

"Ah, ha! Is it you, my lad?" he said to the young tenor. "You have come to see me in my new shop? I shall be very comfortable here, and my wife is delighted to have room to lodge all the children downstairs. What are you looking for? Has Consuelo forgotten anything? Look, my lad, look! I do not mind."

"Where is her furniture?" asked Anzoleto, deeply moved, and cut to the heart at no longer finding a trace of Consuelo in this place, consecrated by the purest pleasures of his whole past life.

"Her furniture is down in the court. She gave it to Mother Agatha, and she did well. The old woman is poor, and it will give her a little money. Oh, Consuelo always had a good heart! She did not leave a penny of debts in the Corte, and she made a little present to every one when she left. She took nothing but her crucifix. But her departure was strange, — to go in the middle of the night without telling any one. Maestro Porpora came here this

morning to settle all her affairs ; it was like carrying out a will. It grieved all the neighbors ; but, after all, they were consoled by thinking that she had, no doubt, gone to live in a handsome palace on the Canaletto, now that she is rich and a fine lady. I always said that she would make her fortune with her voice. She worked so hard ! And when is the wedding to be, Anzoleto ? I hope that you will buy me something to make little presents to the young girls in the quarter."

"Yes, yes !" said Anzoleto, quite dazed.

He went down, and in the yard saw all the old women of the neighborhood bidding on Consuelo's table and bed,—the bed on which he had seen her asleep, the table at which he had watched her work !

"O God ! nothing left of her already !" he cried, wringing his hands. He felt like poniarding Corilla.

Three days later he reappeared at the theatre with Corilla. Both were outrageously hissed, and they had to lower the curtain without finishing the piece. Anzoleto was furious, and Corilla calm.

"This is what your protection is worth !" he cried, threateningly, when they were alone together.

"You are disturbed for very little, my poor boy," replied the prima donna very unconcernedly ; "it is clear that you do not know the public, and that you have never faced its ill-temper. I was so well prepared for this evening's failure that I did not take the trouble to read over my part, and I did not tell you what was going to happen only because I knew that

you would not have the courage to go on the stage with the certainty of being hissed. Now you may as well know what is still awaiting us. The next time we shall be even worse treated. Three, four, six, eight performances, perhaps, will be like this ; but during these storms an opposition will arise in our favor. If we were the vilest strollers in the world, the spirit of contradiction and independence would still create partisans for us. There are so many people who think they give themselves importance by abusing artists, that there are others who think they make themselves important by protecting them. After a dozen trials, during which the theatre will be a battlefield between hisses and applause, the angry will get weary, the obstinate will sulk, and we shall enter on a new phase. That portion of the public which has sustained us without knowing exactly why will listen to us coldly enough ; it will be like a new debut for us, and then, thank Heaven ! it will be our business to warm up the audience and remain masters of the field. I can predict a great success for you then, Anzoletto, for the spell which has lately been over you will be broken. You will breathe an atmosphere of praise and encouragement which must give you back your power. Remember the effect you produced at the Zustiniani palace the first time you sang there. You did not have time to follow up your victory ; a more brilliant star came to eclipse you. But this star has sunk again beneath the horizon, and you must prepare to mount the empyrean with me."

Everything happened as Corilla had predicted. The public, it is true, made the lovers pay heavily for the loss it had sustained in the person of Consuelo. But their courage in facing the tempest wore out an anger which was too noisy to be lasting. The count encouraged Corilla's efforts. As for Anzoletto, after trying in vain to attract a first tenor to Venice so late in the season, when all the engagements were made in the principal theatres of Europe, the count submitted to the inevitable, and accepted the young tenor as his champion in the struggle which began between the public and the management of his theatre. The San-Samuel had had too brilliant a success to be seriously injured by the loss of a single singer. Nothing of the kind could overthrow the established habits of the public. All the boxes were rented for the season. The ladies entertained their friends and chatted there as usual. The true dilettanti sulked for a while, but their number was too small for them to be noticed. Besides, they got tired of being ill-tempered, and one fine evening Corilla, who had sung with passion, was unanimously recalled. She appeared, leading Anzoletto, who had not been called at all, but who seemed to yield to a gentle violence with a modest and timid air. He received his share of the applause, and the next day was himself recalled. Finally, before a month was gone, Consuelo was clean forgotten, like a flash of lightning which shoots athwart a summer sky. Corilla was as enthusiastically applauded as of old, and perhaps deserved it better, for emulation had given

her more spirit and earnestness, and love sometimes inspired her with a truer feeling. As for Anzoletto, although he had not lost his faults, he had succeeded in displaying his unquestionable merits. The public had become accustomed to the one and admired the other. His charming person fascinated the women, who fought for him in drawing-rooms, and this all the more that Corilla's jealousy lent a spice to the coquetries of which he was the object. Clorinda had also developed her attractions at the theatre; that is to say, her heavy beauty and the sensual indifference of a stupidity which was without equal, but not without charm for some of the spectators. Zustiniani had covered her with diamonds, and was urging her for the principal roles, hoping that she might succeed Corilla, who had made a definite engagement with Paris for the following season.

Corilla was indifferent to this rivalry, from which she had nothing to fear, either in the present or in the future; and she even took a malicious pleasure in showing off the coldly impudent incapacity of Clorinda, which dared everything. Consequently, the two women lived together amicably enough, and ruled the management with a rod of iron. They thrust aside all really good scores, and revenged themselves on Porpora by refusing his operas and by patronizing and winning success for his meanest rivals. They united to injure those who displeased them, and to protect those who humbled themselves before their power. Thanks to them, the works of the decadence were

applauded that year in Venice, and people forgot that true, great music had once reigned there.

In the midst of his success and his prosperity (for the count had made a liberal engagement with him) Anzoleto was overwhelmed by a profound disgust, and was sinking under the weight of his good fortune. Spoiled and corrupted by Corilla, he had begun to turn against her the feelings of selfishness and ingratitude with which she had inspired him against the world at large. There remained in his heart but one true and irresistibly pure sentiment, — the indestructible love which, in spite of his vices, he felt for Consuelo. He could forget it, thanks to the levity of his nature, but he could not be cured of it, and it came back to him like a remorse in his guiltiest moments.

Plunging into the wildest dissipation, he appeared to be striving to stifle every memory of the past. But in the midst of this dissipation a spectre seemed to dog his footsteps, and great sobs would rise from his breast as he passed at night with his noisy companions beside the sombre walls of the Corte Minelli.

Corilla, who had been long subjugated by his harsh treatment, and who, like all base souls, loved in proportion to the contempt and abuse which she received, began at last to weary of this fatal passion. She had hoped to subdue and enchain his wandering fancy, and labored earnestly to this end, sacrificing everything to it. When she found that she could not succeed, she began to hate him, and to seek amusement with others. One evening, as Anzoleto was drifting about in a

gondola with Clorinda, he saw another bark gliding swiftly by, as if to some secret appointment. He paid little attention to it, but Clorinda, who was always on the watch, said, —

“Let us go more slowly. It is the count’s gondola ; I recognized the boatman.”

“In that case, let us go faster. I should like to catch up with him, and see who is with him this evening.”

“No, no, let us go back !” exclaimed Clorinda. “His eye is so sharp, and his ear so acute ! Let us not disturb him.”

“Go faster, I say !” cried Anzoleto to his gondolier. “I wish to catch that boat ahead of us.”

It was the work of a moment. The two boats touched each other, and Anzoleto heard a half-stifled laugh from the count’s gondola.

“Good !” said he, “it is Corilla, taking a sail with the count.”

As he spoke, Anzoleto sprang to the bow of his boat, took the oar from his gondolier, and following swiftly after the other gondola, caught up with it, and brushed against it anew, and, whether he heard his name amid Corilla’s laughter, or whether a sudden fit of madness seized him, he began to say aloud, —

“Dear Clorinda, you are without question the most beautiful and the best beloved of all women !”

“I was just saying the same thing to Corilla,” said the count, coming out of his cabin with an easy grace, and stepping towards the other boat ; “and now that

our excursions are over, we might make an exchange, like honest men who deal in goods of equal value."

"You do justice to my integrity, lord count," said Anzoletto, in the same tone. "If you will allow me, I will offer you my arm to come and take your own property."

The count stretched out his arm to lean on Anzoletto, when the tenor, mad with hatred and furious with rage, sprang with all his might on the count's gondola, and swamped the frail bark as he exclaimed savagely, —

"Mistress for mistress, count, and gondola for gondola !"

Then, abandoning his visitors to their fate, and leaving Clorinda to take the consequences of the adventure, he swam to the nearest bank, hastened through the dark and winding streets to his lodging, and changed his clothes in the twinkling of an eye. Taking all the money he had, he sprang into the first boat which was to sail, and speeding towards Trieste, he snapped his fingers triumphantly as he saw the towers and domes of Venice sink beneath the waves, under the rays of the rising sun.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON the western spur of the Carpathian Mountains, which separates Bohemia from Bavaria, and which is known in those countries as the Boehmerwald, there stood, a hundred years ago, a vast old manor called from some tradition, I know not what, the Castle of the Giants. Although from a distance it had the appearance of an ancient fortress, it was no more than a country-house, decorated within in the dignified, though even then somewhat antiquated, style of Louis XIV. The feudal architecture of its exterior had also undergone some pleasing modifications in the part of the building occupied by the Lords of Rudolstadt, the masters of the domain.

This family, which was of Bohemian origin, had Germanized its name when it abjured the reformed religion at the most tragic period of the Thirty Years' War. A noble and valiant ancestor, an inflexible Protestant, had been butchered on the neighboring mountain by a fanatic soldiery. His widow, who was of a Saxon family, saved the fortune and the lives of her little children by declaring herself a Catholic, and by intrusting the education of the heirs of Rudolstadt to the Jesuits. Two generations later, when Bohemia lay silent and crushed, when the Austrian power was firmly established, and the glories and the misfortunes

of the Reformation were forgotten, at least in appearance, the Lords of Rudolstadt modestly practised the Christian virtues, professed the Roman faith, and lived on their estates with sumptuous simplicity, like good aristocrats and faithful servants of Maria Theresa. They had amply proved their bravery in the service of the Emperor Charles VI. But people were surprised that the last of this illustrious and valiant race, the young Albert, had not taken up arms in the War of Succession, which had just ended, and that he had reached the age of thirty without seeking other distinction than was afforded by his birth and his fortune. This strange conduct had caused the Rudolstadts to be suspected by their sovereigns of complicity with their enemies. But Count Christian, having the honor to receive the empress in his castle, had given her such an explanation of his son's conduct as had seemed to satisfy her. A singular mystery hung over this religious and charitable family, which for ten years had had no constant visitor ; which no business, no pleasure, no political excitement, could draw from its estates ; which paid its war subsidies generously and uncomplainingly, but without showing any concern for the public dangers or misfortunes ; which, in short, seemed no longer to live the same life as other nobles, and which was distrusted by them, although its outward acts had consisted only of good and noble deeds. Not knowing to what to attribute this reserved and retired life, people accused the Rudolstadts sometimes of misanthropy, sometimes of avarice ; but

as their conduct gave the lie to these imputations, people were reduced to charging them simply with excessive apathy and indifference. They said that Count Christian did not wish to risk the life of his only son, the last of his name, in these dangerous wars, and that the empress had accepted, in exchange for his military services, a sum of money sufficient to equip a regiment of hussars. The noble dames who had marriageable daughters said that the count had done wisely ; but when they learned of his design to marry his son in his own family, by giving him the daughter of the Baron Frederick, his brother, and when they knew that the young Baroness Amelia had left the convent at Prague in which she had been brought up, and had gone to dwell in the society of her cousin in the Castle of the Giants, these noble ladies declared that the Rudolstadtts were a pack of wolves, each more unsociable and more ferocious than the others. A few incorruptible servants and devoted friends alone knew the secret of the family, and kept it faithfully.

This noble family was gathered one evening about a table loaded with game and those substantial dishes which still formed the food of our ancestors in Slavonic countries at that period, in spite of the refinements which the court of Louis XV. had introduced into the customs of a great part of the aristocracy of Europe. An immense fireplace, in which burned huge logs of oak, heated the large and sombre apartment. Count Christian had recited aloud the

Benedicte, to which the other members of the family had listened standing. Numerous servants, all aged and grave, in large Turkish trousers and with long mustaches, moved solemnly about their honored masters. The chaplain of the castle took his place on the right of Count Christian, while his niece, the young Baroness Amelia, was at the count's left, the "side next his heart," as he would sometimes say with austere and paternal gallantry. Baron Frederick, whom he always called his "young brother," because he was barely sixty, was opposite him. The Canoness Wenceslawa, his elder sister, a venerable lady of seventy, frightfully thin, and afflicted with an enormous hump, sat at one end of the table; and Count Albert, the son of Count Christian, Amelia's betrothed and the last of the Rudolstadt, came, pale and gloomy, and sat down with an absent look opposite his noble aunt.

Of all these silent persons, Albert was certainly the least disposed and the least accustomed to lend animation to the others. The chaplain was so devoted to his masters and so respectful to the head of the family that he hardly ever spoke unless prompted by a look from Count Christian; and the count was so quiet and thoughtful that he seldom felt the need of seeking in others a distraction from his own meditations.

The character of Baron Frederick was more shallow, and his temperament more active, but his mind was scarcely more animated. As gentle and benevo-

lent as his brother, he had less intelligence and enthusiasm. He was religious from habit and a sense of propriety. His only passion was the chase. He passed his days in hunting, and returned each evening, not weary, — for he had an iron frame, — but red, out of breath, and hungry. He ate for ten, drank for thirty, and at dessert brightened up a little as he told how his dog Saphyr had started a hare, how Panther had tracked a wolf, or how his falcon Attila had made her flight; and when he had been listened to with inexhaustible courtesy, he dozed quietly beside the fire in a great chair of black leather, until his daughter told him that the hour of retiring had struck.

The canoness was the most talkative of the family. She might almost have been called garrulous, for twice a week would she discuss with the chaplain for full a quarter of an hour the genealogies of Bohemian, Hungarian and Saxon families, which she knew by heart, from king down to simple gentleman.

As for Count Albert, the others watched his every motion with solemn and fearful attention, as if each of his gestures were a prophecy, each of his words a doom. By a peculiarity which would have been inexplicable to any one who did not know the secrets of the house, the eyes of masters and servants alike were fixed upon him when he spoke, which did not always happen once in four-and-twenty hours. Then profound anxiety and tender and painful solicitude

were expressed on every face, save that of the young Baroness Amelia, who often received his words with impatience or ridicule, and alone dared to reply to them with a familiarity which was contemptuous or playful, as her humor prompted.

This young girl, fair, and rather high in color, trimly built and animated, was a little pearl of beauty ; and when her maid would tell her so to dissipate her ennui, she would reply, "Alas ! I am a pearl shut up in this dreary family as in an oyster, whose shell is this frightful Castle of the Giants." This will be enough to show the reader what a restless bird was confined in this iron cage.

That evening, the solemn silence which weighed upon the whole family, especially at the first course (for the two old gentlemen, the canoness, and the chaplain had a solidity and constancy of appetite which never failed them), was broken by Count Albert.

"What frightful weather !" said he, with a deep sigh.

The rest looked at each other with surprise, for if the weather had become dark and threatening, no one could know it, since they had been inside the castle for an hour, and the thick oaken shutters were closed. A profound stillness reigned without the castle as within, and nothing indicated that a tempest was about to burst.

Still, no one thought of contradicting Albert, and Amelia alone shrugged her shoulders, while the play

of the forks and the clatter of the dishes, slowly changed by the servants, began again after a moment of anxiety.

"Do you not hear the howling of the wind through the pines of the Boehmerwald, and the roar of the torrent?" said Albert, looking fixedly at his father.

Count Christian did not reply. The baron, in a conciliatory tone, replied, without raising his eyes from the piece of venison which he was cutting with his athletic hand as one would carve a block of granite, —

"It is true ; the wind promised rain at sunset, and we may very likely have bad weather to-morrow."

Albert smiled with a strange expression, and all became gloomy again. But five minutes had scarcely passed when a terrible gust of wind shook the panes of the immense windows, roared savagely as it beat the waters of the moat like a scourge, and lost itself in the heights of the mountain with a moan so sharp and so plaintive that all faces paled at it except that of Count Albert, who smiled with the same undefinable expression as before.

"At this moment," he said, "the storm is bearing a stranger guest to us. You would do well, Sir Chaplain, to pray for those who are faring through our rough mountains amid the raging tempest."

"Always, and from the bottom of my heart," said the chaplain, all a-tremble, "am I praying for those who journey through the rough paths of life, amid the tempest of human passions."

"Do not answer him, chaplain," said Amelia, with-

out regarding the looks and signs which warned her on every side not to follow up the conversation. "You know very well that my cousin likes to torment people by speaking in riddles. As for me, I care very little for the answers to them."

Count Albert appeared to pay no more attention to the sarcasm of his cousin than she pretended to pay to his remarks. He leaned his elbow in his plate, which almost always lay empty before him, and gazed fixedly at the damask cloth, as if counting its figures, although he was absorbed in a sort of ecstatic revery.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A FURIOUS tempest burst during the supper, which always lasted two hours, neither more nor less, even on fast days, which were religiously observed, but which did not release the count from the yoke of his habits, which were as sacred to him as the rules of the Romish church. Storms were too frequent in these mountains, and the immense forests which still covered their sides at this period gave to the noise of the wind and the thunder reverberations and echoes too well known to the lords of the castle for an incident of this sort to affect them greatly. Still, the extraordinary agitation which Count Albert showed was shared involuntarily by the rest of the family; and the baron, thus disturbed in the enjoyment of his meal, would have been somewhat put out if it had been possible for his kindly disposition to be ruffled even for an instant. He only sighed deeply when a frightful crash of thunder, which came as the entremets were brought on, frightened the carver so that he mangled the boar's ham which he was just cutting.

"What is done, is done," said he, with a sympathizing smile to the poor carver, who was horrified at his mishap.

"Yes, my uncle, you are right!" cried Count Albert in a loud voice, as he rose from his seat; "what is

done is done. The Hussite is blown down. The lightning is consuming it, and never again will the spring clothe it with green."

"What do you mean, my son?" said the old count, sadly; "are you speaking of the great oak of the Schreckenstein?"¹

"Yes, father; I mean the great oak on whose branches we hanged more than twenty Augustine monks a few weeks ago."

"Now he is taking centuries for weeks!" said the canoness in a low voice, as she crossed herself. "If it is true, dear child," she said aloud to her nephew, "that something which you have seen in a dream has really occurred, or is about to occur (as has sometimes happened, curiously enough), we should not care much for the loss of this withered old oak, which, along with the stone which it shades, recalls to us such painful memories."

"As for me," said Amelia, glad of the chance to exercise her little tongue, "I should be grateful to the storm for ridding us of the sight of this frightful gallows, whose branches are like a skeleton, and whose trunk, covered with red moss, always seems to be sweating blood. I can never pass beneath it in the evening without shuddering at the sound of the wind which moans through its leaves like the sigh of a dying man, and I commend my soul to God as I hurry by, turning away my head."

"Amelia," replied the young count, 'who for the

¹ "Rock of Terror." Several places in Bohemia bear this name.

first time, perhaps, in many days, had listened attentively to his cousin's words, "you have done well not to remain beneath the Hussite as I have for hours: yes, for whole nights. You would have seen and heard there things which would have frozen you with affright, and which would never be effaced from your memory."

"Be silent!" cried the young baroness, shifting about on her chair as if to move away from the table on which Albert was leaning, "I cannot understand the pleasure which you take in frightening me whenever you are pleased to open your mouth."

"Would to Heaven, dear Amelia," said old Christian, gently, "that it were indeed a pleasure for your cousin to say these things!"

"No, father, I am speaking very seriously," replied Count Albert. "The oak of the Rock of Terror is overthrown, and you can send your woodmen to cut it up. I will plant a cypress in its place, and call it, not the Hussite, but the Penitent, and the Rock of Terror should long since have been called the Rock of Atonement."

"Enough, enough, my son!" said the old man, with bitter anguish. "Put away from you these sad pictures, and leave it to God to judge the actions of men."

"The sad pictures have disappeared, father. They have vanished into nothing, along with the instruments of torture which the breath of the storm and the fire of heaven have just laid in the dust. I see, instead of

the skeletons which hung on it, flowers and fruits waving in the breeze, growing on the branches of a new stem. Instead of the man in black who nightly lit the pyre, I see a white and heavenly soul, hovering over your head and mine. The storm is breaking, the danger is past ! Those who are journeying are in safety, and my soul is at peace. The period of expiation is nearing its end. I feel myself being born anew ! ”

“ God grant that you speak truly, my beloved son,” said old Christian, in a trembling voice, and with an accent of profound tenderness ; “ God grant that you may be freed from the visions of the phantoms which haunt your slumbers ! May he in his mercy restore to my dear Albert peace, hope, and the light of faith ! ”

Before he had finished these words, Albert bent gently over the table, and seemed to fall suddenly into a tranquil sleep.

“ What does he mean now ? ” asked the young baroness of her father ; “ there he is, going to sleep at the table ! It is really very polite ! ”

“ This sudden and deep sleep,” replied the chaplain, looking at the young man with interest, “ is a favorable crisis, which promises a happy change in his condition, for some time at least.”

“ Let no one speak to him,” said Count Christian, “ or try to arouse him from his slumber.”

“ O merciful Father ! ” said the *cánonesa* ardently, clasping her hands, “ grant that his constant prediction

may be realized, and that his thirtieth birthday may be the day of his final recovery."

"Amen!" added the chaplain with unction. "Let us lift up our hearts to the God of pity, and as we thank him for the food of which we have just partaken, let us implore him to grant the deliverance of this noble youth, the object of our solicitude."

They rose to say grace, and every one remained standing for a few moments, praying for the last of the Rudolstadt. The supplications of old Christian were so fervent that two great tears rolled down his withered cheeks.

The old man had just directed the servants to bear his son to his apartment, when Baron Frederick, who had sought for some means of contributing to the welfare of his nephew, said to his brother with childish satisfaction, "I have a good idea, brother; if your son awakes alone in his own room, before he has digested his supper, more sombre ideas may come to him as the result of bad dreams. Have him carried into the drawing-room and placed in my chair. There is no other in the house so good to sleep in. He will be more comfortable there than in his bed, and when he awakes he will at least find a good fire to refresh his sight, and friendly faces to gladden his heart."

"You are right, brother," replied Christian. "He can be taken into the drawing-room and placed upon the sofa."

"It is very unhealthy to sleep lying down after

supper," cried the baron. "Believe me, brother, I know it by experience. He must have my chair. Yes, I wish him positively to have my chair."

Christian saw that to refuse would be to cause his brother real unhappiness. They placed the young count, therefore, in the old hunter's leathern chair, without his being in the least disturbed, so closely did his sleep resemble a state of lethargy. The baron sat down, proud and happy, on another chair, warming his shins before a fire worthy of heroic days, and smiling triumphantly whenever the chaplain would remark that Count Albert's sleep ought to be productive of the best results. The good man designed to give up his nap as well as his chair, and to join with the rest of the family in watching over the young count; but before a quarter of an hour had expired, he became so accustomed to his new seat that he began to snore loud enough to drown the last rumblings of the thunder, which was dying away in the distance.

The sound of the great bell of the castle, which was never rung save upon the occasion of extraordinary visits, was suddenly heard, and old Hans, the butler, came in shortly after, bearing a large letter, which he presented without a word to Count Christian. Then he went out to await his master's orders in a neighboring room.

Christian opened the letter, and having glanced at the signature, handed the paper to the young baroness, begging her to read it to him. Amelia, curious

and excited, sat down by a candle, and read as follows : —

“ Illustrious and well-beloved Lord Count, — Your excellency does me the honor to ask a service of me. In this you confer upon me one still greater than all those that I have received of you, the remembrance of which my heart preserves and cherishes. In spite of my zeal to carry out your honored instructions, I nevertheless could not hope to find the person for whom you ask as promptly and as satisfactorily as I wished. But favorable circumstances coinciding in an unforeseen manner with the wishes of your lordship, I hasten to send you a person who fulfils a part of your conditions. She does not, however, fulfil them all. Therefore, I only send her provisionally, to enable your illustrious and amiable niece to await without too much impatience a more satisfactory result of my researches and endeavors.

“ The person who will have the honor of handing you this letter is my pupil, and in some sort my adopted daughter. She will be, as the amiable Baroness Amelia desires, both an obliging and agreeable companion, and a learned instructor in music. In other respects, she has not the education which you need in a governess. She speaks several languages fluently, but she does not, perhaps, know them correctly enough to teach them. She understands music thoroughly, and sings remarkably well. You will be satisfied with her talent, her voice and her bearing, no less than with

the sweetness and the dignity of her character, and your lordship can admit her to your intimacy without fear of her ever being guilty of ill-breeding or giving evidence of an unworthy sentiment. She desires to be as free as her duty to your noble family will permit, and to receive no salary. In a word, it is neither a duenna nor a maid that I am sending to the amiable baroness, but a companion and a friend, as she does me the honor to ask of me in the postscript added by her beautiful hand to your excellency's letter.

“Signor Corner, who had been appointed to the Austrian embassy, is awaiting the order for his departure, but he is almost certain that he will not receive this order for two months. Signora Corner, his noble spouse and my generous pupil, wishes to take me with her to Vienna, where, in her opinion, my career will be more prosperous. Without believing in a better future, I have accepted her generous offer, anxious as I am to quit this ungrateful Venice, where I have met with nothing but disappointment, affronts, and mishaps of all sorts. I long to see again that noble Germany, where I have known happier days, and the honored friends whom I left there. Your lordship well knows that you occupy one of the most prominent places in the memories of this old heart, harassed, but not chilled, which you filled with a lasting affection and profound gratitude; I therefore commend and intrust to you, most illustrious sir, my adopted daughter, asking in her behalf hospitality, protection and good-will. She will repay your kind-

ness by her zeal in making herself useful and agreeable to the young baroness. In three months at the outside I will go to seek her, and to present to you in her place a governess who can contract a longer engagement with your illustrious family.

"Awaiting the fortunate day when I may press between my hands those of the best of men, I venture to call myself, with pride and respect, the most humble of the servants and the most devoted of the friends of your excellency *chiarissima, stimatissima, illustrissima*, etc.

"NICHOLAS PORPORA,

"Chapel master, composer, and teacher of singing.

"VENICE, —, 17—."

Amelia leaped with joy when she ended the letter, while the old count repeated several times, "Worthy Porpora, excellent friend, estimable man!"

"Certainly, certainly," said the Canoness Wenceslawa, divided between the dread of seeing the habits of the family disturbed by the arrival of a stranger, and the desire to show a generous hospitality, "we must receive her and treat her well. I only hope she may not find the life here too irksome."

"But, uncle, where is my future friend, my precious mistress?" cried the young baroness, without listening to her aunt's observations. "Will she not soon arrive herself? I am impatient to see her!"

Count Christian rang. "Hans," said he to the old servant, "who handed you this letter?"

"A lady, my lord."

"Is she here already?" cried Amelia. "Where, where!"

"In her post-chaise, at the drawbridge."

"And you have left her cooling her heels at the door, instead of bringing her in at once?"

"Yes, madame; I took the letter, and forbade the postillion to take his foot out of the stirrup, or to lay down his reins. I had the drawbridge lifted behind me, and I delivered the letter to my lord and master."

"But it is absurd, unpardonable, to keep our guests waiting outside in such bad weather. One would say that we were in a fortress, and whoever came near was an enemy. Hurry, Hans!"

Hans remained motionless as a statue. His eyes alone expressed his regret at his inability to fulfil the desire of his young mistress; but a cannon-ball passing over his head would not have changed by an inch the impassible attitude in which he awaited the orders of his old master.

"Faithful Hans knows only his duty and his instructions, my dear child," said Count Christian at last, with a deliberation which made the baroness's blood boil. "Hans, go and open the gate, and lower the drawbridge. Let every one go with torches to receive the traveller. May she be welcome here!"

Hans did not show the slightest surprise at having to introduce suddenly an unknown visitor into this house, to which the nearest relations and the most faithful friends were not always admitted without de-

lay and precautions. The canoness went to give her orders for the stranger's supper. Amelia wished to hurry to the drawbridge, but her uncle, desiring to do the honors of his house to his guest himself, offered her his arm, and the impatient little baroness was compelled to march majestically to the porch, where the post-chaise had just set down the wandering fugitive, Consuelo.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THREE months had passed since the Baroness Amelia had taken it into her head to have a companion, much less to instruct her than to amuse her in her loneliness ; and during that time she had painted in her imagination the portrait of her future friend a hundred times. Knowing Porpora's morose temper, she had feared that he would send her a stiff and pedantic governess. She had, consequently, written secretly to the musician to tell him that she would accord but a poor reception to any governess of more than five-and-twenty, — as if it would not have been enough for her to express her desire to her kinsfolk, whose idol and queen she was.

When she read Porpora's letter, she was so delighted that she improvised on the moment the portrait of the musician, Porpora's adopted daughter, young, and above all a Venetian ; that is to say, in Amelia's fancy, created for her precisely as she would have wished.

She was a little disconcerted, therefore, when, instead of the playful girl, fresh and rosy, of whom she had been dreaming, she saw a pale, melancholy and much embarrassed young woman ; for to the bitter grief by which Consuelo's poor heart was torn, and to the fatigue of a long and rapid journey, had been

added a most painful impression, caused by the vast, storm-beaten forests, by the darkness of the night, broken only by livid lightning-flashes, and above all by the appearance of the gloomy castle, to which the howling of the baron's hounds, and the light of the torches carried by the servants, lent a truly sinister aspect. What a contrast with Marcello's "firmamento lucido," the harmonious silence of Venetian nights, and the trustful liberty of her life passed in the light of love and poetry! When the carriage had passed slowly over the drawbridge, which sounded hollow beneath the horses' hoofs, and when the portcullis had fallen behind her with a mournful cry, it seemed to her that she had entered Dante's hell, and, filled with terror, she commended her soul to God.

Her face was consequently discomposed when she appeared before her hosts, and when Count Christian suddenly appeared, with his long, pale face, withered by age and grief, and his thin, erect form, in its antique costume, she thought she saw the ghost of a baron of the Middle Ages; and, taking all that she saw about her for a vision, she started back with a stifled cry of fright.

The count, attributing her hesitation and her paleness to the exhaustion and fatigue of her journey, offered her his arm to ascend the steps, attempting at the same time to say to her a few words of interest and politeness. But the worthy man was not only outwardly cold and reserved by nature, but the many years which he had spent in retirement had so in-

creased his timidity that under a grave and austere appearance he concealed the embarrassment and confusion of a child. The necessity which he felt of speaking in Italian, a tongue which he had formerly known moderately well, but in which he was quite out of practice, added so much to his embarrassment that he could only stammer a few words which Consuelo could scarcely hear, and which she took for the unknown and mysterious language of spirits.

Amelia, who had determined to fall upon her neck and make her feel at home at once, could find nothing to say to her, as often happens to the boldest natures, when the timidity of another seems ready to take fright at their advances.

Consuelo was shown into the large room in which they had supped. The count, divided between the desire to do her honor and the fear of having her see his son while in his lethargic sleep, paused irresolute, and Consuelo, feeling her limbs fail her, fell trembling upon the nearest chair.

"Uncle Christian," said Amelia, who understood the count's embarrassment, "I think that it would be best to receive the signora here. It is warmer than in the drawing-room, and she must be chilled by the storm-wind of our mountains. I am sorry to see that she is faint with fatigue, and I am sure that she needs a good supper and a good sleep far more than all our ceremony. Am I not right, dear signora?" she added, sufficiently emboldened to clasp Consuelo's wearied arm in her dimpled hand.

The sound of this fresh voice, pronouncing Italian with frank German roughness, reassured Consuelo. She raised her grateful eyes to the young baroness's pretty face, and the look they exchanged broke the ice at once. The traveller understood that this was her pupil, and that her charming face was not that of a ghost. She replied to the pressure of the hand, and admitted that she was quite stunned by the noise of the carriage, and that the storm had frightened her greatly. She yielded to all the attentions which Amelia showered upon her, drew up to the fire, allowed her to relieve her of her cloak, accepted the offer of supper, although she was not in the least hungry, and, being more and more reassured by the increasing amiability of her young hostess, recovered at last the power of seeing, hearing and answering.

While the servants were preparing supper, the conversation naturally turned upon Porpora. Consuelo was happy at hearing the old count speak of him as his friend, his equal, and almost his superior. Then they spoke of Consuelo's journey, of the road which she had followed, and especially of the storm, which must have frightened her.

"We are accustomed in Venice," said Consuelo, "to tempests which are more sudden and much more dangerous, for in our gondolas we run the risk of shipwreck as we go through the streets, and even at our very doors. The water, which is our pavement, grows rough like the waves of the sea, and drives our frail barks against the walls so violently that they may

be sunk before we can land. But, though I have seen accidents of this sort, and am not very timid, I was more frightened this evening than ever before in my life by the fall of a great tree which the lightning threw down the mountain across our road. The horses reared, and the postillion cried, 'The Tree of Misfortune has fallen ! it is the Hussite !' Can you tell me what he meant, baroness ? "

Neither the count nor Amelia thought of answering the question. They shuddered as they looked at each other, and the old man said, —

"My son was not mistaken ! Strange, strange, in truth ! "

And, with his anxiety for Albert awakened afresh, he went out, while Amelia murmured as she clasped her hands, —

"There is magic in this, and the devil himself is among us ! "

These strange remarks brought back to Consuelo the feeling of superstitious awe which she had experienced when she entered the dwelling of the Rudolstadt. Amelia's sudden paleness, the solemn silence of the old servants in red trousers, with crimson faces, all alike, all large and square-cut, having those expressionless and lifeless eyes which come from a love and a lifetime of slavery ; the height of the room, wainscoted with black oak, in which the light of a chandelier loaded with candles could not dispel the darkness ; the hooting of an owl, hunting near the castle after the storm ; the large family portraits,

the enormous heads of stags and wild boars carved in relief upon the wood-work, — everything, to the smallest details, revived in her the gloomy impressions which had hardly been dispelled. The reflections of the young baroness were not of a nature to reassure her greatly.

“My dear signora,” said Amelia, as she made ready to wait on her, “you must prepare yourself to see in this castle things which are unheard of, inexplicable, sometimes frightful, — true scenes from a romance which no one would believe if you were to tell, and which you will be pledged upon your honor to keep inviolably secret.”

As the baroness was speaking, the door opened, and the Canoness Wenceslawa, with her hump, her angular figure, and her severe costume, set off by the grand cordon of her order, which she never laid aside, entered with the most majestically affable air which she had worn since the memorable day on which the Empress Maria Theresa, returning from a journey to Hungary, had done the Castle of the Giants the signal honor of taking there a cup of hippocrass and an hour’s rest. She came towards Consuelo, who, surprised and terrified, was looking at her with distended eyes without thinking of rising, made two courtesies to her, and after a speech in German which she seemed to have learned by heart, so formal was it, drew near to her to place a kiss upon her brow. The poor child, colder than marble, thought that she was receiving the kiss of Death, and, half fainting, mur-

mured her thanks unintelligibly. When the canoness, seeing that her presence frightened the traveller, had gone into the drawing-room, Amelia burst into a peal of laughter.

"I will wager," said she, "that you thought you saw the ghost of Queen Libussa. But be quite easy. That good canoness is my aunt, the most tiresome and the best of women."

Consuelo had hardly recovered from this shock when she heard behind her the creaking of thick Hungarian boots. A tread, heavy and slow, shook the floor, and a face, so massive, so red, and so square that those of the old servants seemed pale and delicate beside it, passed through the room in silence, and went out by the door, which the domestic opened respectfully. Again did Consuelo shudder, and again the baroness laughed.

"That," said she, "is the Baron of Rudolstadt, a great hunter, a great sleeper, and the tenderest of fathers. He has just finished his nap in the drawing-room. At the stroke of nine he rises from his chair, but without waking up, goes through this room without seeing or hearing anything, ascends the stairs, — still asleep, — goes to bed without knowing it, and awakes before day, as bright, alert and active as a young man, to go and make ready his dogs, his horses and his falcons for the chase."

Hardly had she finished this explanation when the chaplain went by. He, too, was stout, but short and pale. A life of contemplation does not agree with

these heavy Slav natures, and the holy man's stoutness was not healthy. He only bowed to the two ladies, spoke in an undertone to a servant, and disappeared by the same road the baron had taken. Then Hans and another of the automata whom Consuelo could not tell apart, so much alike were they, went towards the drawing-room. Consuelo, who could no longer find the strength to pretend to eat, turned about to follow them with her eyes; but before they had reached the door behind her, a new apparition stood upon the threshold, more striking than the others. It was a young man of commanding figure and handsome face, but frightfully pale. He was clad in black from head to foot, and a rich pelisse, trimmed with sable, was fastened to his shoulders by loops and hooks of gold. His long hair, black as ebony, fell in disorder over his pale cheeks, which were shaded by a silky, curling beard. He made an imperious gesture to the servants who were coming towards him, forcing them back and holding them motionless at a distance, as if his look had fascinated them. Then, turning to Count Christian, who was following him, he said, in a sweet voice and with a dignified manner, —

“ I assure you, father, that I have never been so calm. Some great thing is accomplished in my destiny, and the peace of heaven has descended upon our house.”

“ May God grant it, my son ! ” said the old man, stretching out his hand to bless him.

The young man bent low beneath his father's hand ;

then, standing erect with a sweet and serene expression, he stepped into the middle of the room, smiled faintly as he touched with the end of his fingers the hand which Amelia held out to him, and looked fixedly at Consuelo for several seconds. Struck with involuntary respect, Consuelo bowed to him with downcast eyes. But he did not return her bow, and continued to look at her.

"This young person," said the canoness to him in German, "is the" —

He interrupted her with a gesture which seemed to say, "Do not speak to me, do not disturb my train of thought." Then he turned away without giving the slightest sign of surprise or interest, and went slowly out of the door.

"My dear young lady," said the canoness, "you must excuse" —

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, aunt," said Amelia, "but you are speaking German to the signora, who does not understand it."

"Pardon me, good signora," said Consuelo in Italian; "I spoke many languages in my childhood, for I travelled much. I recollect enough German to understand it perfectly. I dare not attempt to speak it yet, but if you will give me a few lessons, I hope that I shall recover it before long."

"Really, that is my case," said the canoness. "I understand all that the young lady says, though I could not speak her language. Since she understands me, I wish to say to her that my nephew, by

not returning her bow, has been guilty of a rudeness which I am sure she will excuse when she knows that he has been severely indisposed this evening, and that after his swoon he is still so weak that no doubt he did not see her — is it not true, brother?" said the good Wenceslawa, quite disturbed by the white lies she had been telling, and seeking her pardon in the eyes of Count Christian.

"My dear sister," replied the old man, "you are generous to excuse my son. The signora will no doubt be good enough not to be too much surprised at certain things which we will frankly explain to her to-morrow, with the confidence which we must needs feel in the adopted daughter of Porpora, and, I hope soon to be able to say, in the friend of our family."

It was the hour when every one retired, and the habits of the house were so regular that if the two young girls had remained longer at the table, the servants, like veritable machines, would probably have set away their chairs and blown out the candles without regard to their presence. Besides, Consuelo was anxious to retire, and Amelia conducted her to an elegant and comfortable chamber next her own, which she had had prepared for her.

"I should greatly like to talk to you for an hour or two," said she, as soon as the canoness, who had gravely done the honors of the apartment, had retired. "I am anxious to explain to you what is going on here, before you have to endure our eccentricities.

But you are so tired that you must desire rest above everything."

"Never mind that, signora," replied Consuelo; "my limbs are very weary, it is true, but my brain is so heated that I am sure not to sleep at all. So talk to me as much as you like, only let it be in German. That will serve me as a lesson, for I see that neither the lord count nor the canoness is familiar with Italian."

"Let us make a bargain," said Amelia. "You will go to bed to rest your poor, wearied limbs, and meanwhile I will put on my dressing-gown and send away my maid. Then I will come back and sit beside you, and we will speak German until we become sleepy. Is it agreed?"

"With all my heart," replied the new governess.

CHAPTER XXV.

"You must know, my dear," said Amelia, when she had finished her arrangements, — "but it occurs to me that I do not know your name," she added, smiling. "We must have no titles or ceremony between us. I wish you to call me Amelia in future, as I intend to call you" —

"My name is foreign, and difficult to pronounce," replied Consuelo. "My excellent master, Porpora, when he sent me here, directed me to take his own, as is the custom of protectors or masters with their favored pupils; therefore for the future I share with the great singer Huber (called Porporino) the honor of calling myself Porporina. But you had better abbreviate it and call me, if you like, simply Nina." ✓

"Very well, then, Nina — between ourselves. Now listen to me, for I have a very long story to tell you, and if I do not begin rather far back you will never understand what is now going on in this house."

"I am all attention," said the new Porporina.

"I suppose you know a little about Bohemian history?" said the young baroness.

"Alas!" replied Consuelo, "I am altogether uneducated, as my master must have written you. I know a little about the history of music, but I am as ignorant of the history of Bohemia as of every other."

“In that case, I will tell you what you need to know that you may understand my story. More than three hundred years ago, the crushed and oppressed race into which you have been transplanted was a bold, unconquerable, heroic people. It had even then, indeed, alien masters, and a religion which it did not understand, and which they wished to force upon it. Innumerable monks oppressed it, and a cruel, debauched king mocked at its dignity and outraged its feelings. But secret rage and deep hatred grew stronger and stronger, and one day the storm burst. The alien masters were driven away, religion was reformed, the convents were pillaged and torn down, and the drunkard Wenceslas was thrown into prison and deprived of his crown. The signal for the revolt was the torture of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, two brave, learned men of Bohemia, who wished to examine and clear up the mystery of Catholicism, and who were summoned, condemned and burned after they had been promised safety and liberty of discussion. This treason and disgrace touched the national honor so deeply that a bloody war raged throughout Bohemia and a great part of Germany for many years. This war of extermination was called the War of the Hussites. Odious and innumerable crimes were committed by both sides. The customs of the age were savage and pitiless all over the earth. Party-spirit and religious fanaticism made them still more terrible, and Bohemia was pointed at with horror by all Europe. I will not harrow up your mind, which

the wild appearance of the country has already disagreeably impressed, by relating the frightful scenes which took place here. On one side they committed murders, burnings and tortures; churches were desecrated, monks and nuns were mutilated, hung, cast into boiling pitch; on the other, towns were burned and whole districts devastated. Hussites were sent to the mines by thousands, filling the pits with their corpses, and strewing the earth with their bones and those of their enemies. These frightful Hussites were long invincible, and to-day we speak their name with dread; yet their patriotism, their intrepid constancy, and their fabulous exploits fill us with a secret feeling of pride and admiration which young people like me sometimes have difficulty in concealing."

"But why conceal it?" asked Consuelo innocently.

"Because Bohemia has again fallen, after many struggles, under the yoke of slavery. There is no longer a Bohemia, my poor Nina. Our masters knew well that religious liberty for our country meant political liberty. That is why they have stifled them both."

"See how ignorant I am," said Consuelo. "I had never heard of all this, and I did not know that men could be so wicked and so unhappy."

"A hundred years after John Huss came another learned man, — a new sectary, — a poor monk named Martin Luther, who aroused the national spirit, and inspired Bohemia and all the independent provinces of Germany with hatred of a foreign tyranny, and

caused them to rebel against the popes. The most powerful kings remained Catholic, not because they loved religion, but because they loved absolute power. Austria fell upon us to crush us, and in the Thirty Years' War overthrew our independence. From the beginning of that war, Bohemia was at the mercy of the strongest side. Austria treated us like a conquered province, and took away from us our religion, our liberty, our language, even our very name. Our fathers resisted bravely, but the imperial yoke has lain heavier and heavier upon us. More than a hundred years ago our nobility, ruined and decimated by confiscation, war and the scaffold, was obliged either to fly from the country or to give up its nationality by forswearing its ancestry, by Germanizing its family names (remember this fact), and by renouncing religious liberty. Our books were burned, our schools were destroyed; in short, we were made Austrians. We are now only a province of the empire, and you hear German spoken by a Slav race. This fact alone tells the whole story."

"And now you sorrow and blush at this slavery. I can well understand it, and I already hate Austria with all my heart."

"Oh, speak lower!" cried the young baroness. "No one can safely speak thus beneath the dark sky of Bohemia; and in this castle there is only one person who has the boldness and the folly to say what you have said, dear Nina. It is my cousin Albert."

"Is that the cause of the grief which one reads in his face? I was filled with respect when I saw him."

"Ah, my handsome lioness of St. Mark!" said Amelia, surprised at the generous impulse which suddenly illumined the pale face of her companion; "you take matters too seriously. I greatly fear that in a few days my poor cousin will fill you more with pity than with respect."

"The one need not prevent the other," replied Consuelo. "But pray explain, dear baroness."

"Mark this," said Amelia. "We are a very Catholic family, and very faithful to the Church and State. We bear a Saxon name, and the Saxon branch of our ancestors has always been most orthodox. If my aunt some day undertakes, to your sorrow, to detail to you the services which our ancestors, the Saxon counts and barons, rendered to the cause of Rome, you will see that, according to her, there is not the slightest blot of heresy upon our escutcheon. Even when Saxony was Protestant, the Rudolstadts chose to abandon their Protestant electors rather than leave the bosom of the Roman Church. But my aunt will never venture to boast of this in the presence of Count Albert, for in that case you would hear him tell the most surprising things ever heard by human ears."

"You greatly excite my curiosity, without satisfying it. I understand this, that I must never appear in the presence of your noble relatives to share your and Count Albert's sympathies for old Bohemia. You

may trust to my prudence, dear baroness. Besides, I was brought up in a Catholic country, and the respect which I have for my religion, as well as that which I owe your family, would cause me to be silent."

"It would be wise, for I must remind you once more that we are exceedingly exacting on that point. So far as I personally am concerned, dear Nina, I am more liberal. I am neither Protestant nor Catholic. I was brought up by nuns, whose sermons and pater-nosters wearied me terribly. The same weariness has followed me here, for my Aunt Wenceslawa is pedantic and superstitious enough for a whole convent. But I have too much of the spirit of the age to sympathize with the no less wearisome doctrines of the Lutherans; and as for the Hussites, theirs is such ancient history that I care no more for it than for the glory of the Greeks and the Romans. French thought is my ideal, and the only reason, philosophy or civilization I admire is that which obtains in that charming land whose books I sometimes read in secret, and whose pleasures, liberty and happiness I behold from afar, as in a dream, through the bars of my prison."

"You surprise me more and more every moment," said Consuelo simply. "How is it that a moment ago you appeared to me full of enthusiasm as you recalled the exploits of your ancient Bohemians? I thought you something of a Bohemian and a heretic."

"I am more than a heretic and more than a Bohemian," replied Amelia, laughing. "I am something of a doubter and altogether a rebel. I hate

rulers of every sort, and especially Austria, who is the most bigoted and straitlaced of duennas."

"And is Count Albert also a doubter? Does he admire French thought? If that is so, you must get on famously."

"Oh! we do not get on at all, and now that I have given you the necessary explanations, it is time for me to speak of him. Count Christian, my uncle, had no children by his first wife. He married again at the age of forty, and had five sons, all of whom died, as well as their mother, of some sort of disease of the brain. This second wife was of pure Bohemian blood, and had, they say, great beauty and a brilliant intellect. I never knew her. You will see her portrait, with a jewelled bodice and scarlet mantle, in the large drawing-room. Albert is wonderfully like her. He is the sixth and last of her children, and the only one who lived to the age of thirty. It has been no easy matter to preserve him even thus far, for he has gone through severe trials, and strange symptoms of a brain trouble still make us fear for his life. Between ourselves, I do not believe that he will long survive the fatal age at which his mother died. Although his father was well advanced in years when Albert was born, he nevertheless has a strong constitution; but as he himself says, the seeds of disease are in him, and this disease has steadily increased. From his earliest infancy, his mind has always been filled with strange and superstitious ideas. When he was four years old, he used to assert that he often saw

his mother beside his cradle, although she was dead, and he had seen her buried. At night he would awake to answer her, and my Aunt Wenceslawa was so frightened by it that she always had several women in her room with the child, while the chaplain used quantities of holy water in exorcising the phantom, and said masses by dozens to compel it to keep quiet. But everything was in vain; for the child, who had not spoken of the apparition for a long time, one day admitted to his nurse that he still saw his 'little mother,' but that he did not care to tell of it, because then the chaplain would come into the room and say bad words to prevent her from revisiting him.

"He was a gloomy and silent child. They tried every means to amuse him, and plied him with playthings and sports which, for a long time, only made him sadder. At last they resolved not to thwart a taste for study which he displayed, and indulgence in this passion did, indeed, give him more animation, but only changed his calm and languishing melancholy into a strange excitement, mingled with paroxysms of grief, the causes of which it was impossible to foresee or avert. For instance, when he saw poor people, he would burst into tears, and give them all his little wealth, grieving the while, and reproaching himself because he could not give them enough. If he saw a child beaten or a peasant misused, he would become so indignant that he would fall into a swoon, or into convulsions which lasted for hours together. All this showed that he had a kindly nature and a

good heart ; but the best qualities, when carried to excess, become faults or follies. Albert's reason did not develop as rapidly as his feelings and his imagination. The study of history excited without enlightening him. When he read of the crimes or injustice of men, he was always moved by too simple emotions, like the barbarian king who, as he listened to the story of our Saviour's passion, brandished his lance and cried, ' Ah ! if I had been there with my soldiers, all this would not have happened ! I would have cut those wicked Jews in a thousand pieces ! '

" Albert could not accept men for what they have been and for what they still are. He thought Heaven unjust in not making them all good and compassionate, like himself, and could not see that his very tenderness and goodness made him impious and misanthropic. He understood nothing but what he felt, and at eighteen he was as incapable of living among men and filling the position in society which his rank exacted, as if he had been but six months old. If any one gave expression in his presence to one of those selfish thoughts which are so common in our poor world, and without which it could not exist, he would instantly show an invincible aversion to him, no matter who he was or what respect was due to him from the family, and nothing could induce him to show the man the slightest attention. His companions were vulgar beings, little favored by fortune or even by nature. In his childish sports he was happy only in the society of poor children, and, above all, those

whose stupidity or infirmities would have wearied or disgusted any one else.

“As, in spite of these oddities, he showed plenty of cleverness and a good memory, and as he had a taste for art, his father and his Aunt Wenceslawa, who were watching over his education with devoted tenderness, had no reason to blush for him in society. His peculiarities were attributed to the timidity incident to his country life, and when he was disposed to carry them too far, they took care to conceal them from any one who could take offence. But in spite of his admirable qualities and good disposition, the count and the canoness were frightened at seeing Albert, who was independent and in some respects indifferent, more and more inclined to disobey the laws of society and the customs of the world.”

“But I see nothing in all this,” said Consuelo, “which shows the insanity of which you spoke.”

“It is, I think,” replied Amelia, “because you have yourself a pure, candid nature. But perhaps you are tired of my chattering, and wish to go to sleep.”

“Not at all, dear baroness,” said Consuelo, “go on, I beg of you ;” and thus requested, Amelia continued her story.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“You say, dear Nina, that thus far you see nothing extravagant in my poor cousin's behavior. I will give you better evidence of it. My uncle and my aunt are certainly the best Christians and the most charitable souls in the world. Their almsgiving has always been most generous, and it is impossible to employ wealth with less pride or ostentation than are shown by them. Well, my cousin thought that their manner of life was wholly opposed to the true evangelical spirit ; and that, after the example of the early Christians, they ought to sell all that they had and give to the poor, and become beggars themselves. Though he did not precisely say this, being restrained by the love and respect he bore them, he made it clear that this was his idea by bitterly compassionating the lot of those poor wretches whose lives are made up of toil and suffering, while the rich live in idleness and ease. When he had given away all the money which they allowed him to spend, it was, to his mind, but a drop in the ocean, and he asked for larger sums, which they hardly dared refuse him, and which flowed through his hands like water. He has given away so much that you cannot find a pauper in the country about us ; and I must say that we are no better off for it, for the demands and the needs of the poor

increase in proportion to the concessions which are made to them, and our good peasants, who were once so humble and meek, now hold their heads much higher, thanks to the prodigality and the fine speeches of their young master. If we had not the imperial power to protect us on the one hand, while it oppresses us on the other, I believe that our lands and our castles would have been pillaged and laid waste twenty times by bands of peasants from the neighboring districts who have been left starving by the war, and whom Albert's inexhaustible pity, which is well known for thirty leagues around, has brought down on us, and especially since the troubles about the succession of the Emperor Charles.

“When Count Christian made wise objections to Albert, saying that to give everything to-day was to leave one's self without the power of giving anything to-morrow, he would reply, ‘Well, my beloved father, have we not a roof to shelter us which will last longer than we, while thousands of unfortunate wretches have nothing but the cold, stormy sky above their heads? Have we not each of us more raiment than would serve to clothe a whole ragged family? Do I not every day see upon our table more food and more good Hungarian wine than would suffice to feed and warm these beggars, worn out by want and fatigue? Have we a right to refuse to give what we have above our own needs? Are we permitted to use even what is strictly necessary when others are in want? Has Christ's law changed?’

“What answer could be made to these fine words by the count, or the canoness, or the chaplain, who had brought up this young man in such fervent and austere religious principles? They were therefore greatly embarrassed at seeing him take everything literally, refusing to make any of those compromises on which, nevertheless, it seems to me that our whole social fabric rests.

“It was far worse when it was a question of politics. Albert thought those laws monstrous which allowed sovereigns to slaughter millions of men and devastate whole districts to avenge their wounded pride or gratify their vanity. His intolerance on this point was dangerous, and they did not dare to take him to Vienna, or Prague, or any other large city, where his fanatical virtue would assuredly have involved him in difficulties. They felt hardly more tranquil on the subject of his religious belief, for there were in his exalted piety all the materials for a most outrageous heretic. He hated the popes, those apostles of Jesus Christ, who leagued themselves with kings to disturb the repose and outrage the dignity of the people. He blamed the bishops for their luxury, the abbess for their worldliness, and all churchmen for their ambition. He would preach to the poor chaplain sermons in the style of Luther and John Huss, and yet he would spend hours prostrate on the floor of the chapel, plunged in meditations and ecstasies worthy of a saint. They say that he even wore a hair-shirt, and that it required all the

authority of his father and all the influence of his aunt to induce him to give up his macerations, which had no small effect in exciting his poor brain.

“When these good and wise friends saw that he was in a fair way to waste his whole patrimony in a few years, and to be cast into prison as an enemy to Church and State, they took at last the painful resolution to have him travel, hoping that when he had seen something of society and the action of its fundamental laws, which are nearly identical in all civilized countries, he would become accustomed to living in it, and conforming to its customs. They intrusted him to a tutor, an acute Jesuit, a man of the world, — and a clever man, if ever there was one, — who understood his task on a hint, and who took upon himself to do all that they wished without daring to ask it. To speak clearly, they wished him to corrupt and tame this wild nature, and break it to the yoke of society, by inoculating it drop by drop with those sweet and necessary poisons, — vanity, ambition, and religious, political, and moral indifference. Do not frown at my words, dear Porporina. My worthy uncle is a simple and good man, who in his youth accepted all these things as he found them, and who through his whole life has known how to reconcile tolerance with religion and his duty as a Christian with his duty as a nobleman. In a world and an age where but one such man as Albert is found among millions like the rest of us, the wise man is he who keeps in harmony with his age and with his environ-

ment ; and he who wishes to go back two thousand years into the past is a madman who offends his fellow-men, and converts nobody.

“ Albert travelled for eight years. He visited Italy, France, England, Prussia, Poland, Russia, and even Turkey. He came home by way of Hungary, Southern Germany and Bavaria. He behaved excellently during this long excursion, never spending more than the ample allowance which his relatives made him, writing them sweet and affectionate letters, in which he spoke only of what he had seen, without making profound observations on anything whatever, and without giving the abbe, his tutor, cause for complaint or annoyance.

“ When he returned home at the beginning of last year, he retired after the first salutations, they say, into the room in which his mother had lived, remained there alone for several hours, and came out, very pale, to walk upon the mountain.

“ During this time the abbe was having a confidential conversation with the Canoness Wenceslawa and the chaplain, who had exacted of him entire frankness concerning the physical and moral condition of the young count. ‘ It may be,’ he said, ‘ that the effect of travelling suddenly changed Count Albert, or it may be that I had formed an entirely mistaken impression of him from what your lordship told me concerning him, but since the very first day of our association he has been as you see him to-day, — gentle, calm, courteous, patient and exquisitely polite. This excellent

bearing has not varied for a single instant, and I should be the most unjust of men if I were to complain of him in the slightest degree. Nothing of what I feared has happened,—neither extravagant expenditure, violent outbursts, declamatory speeches, nor excessive asceticism. He has never desired to manage himself the little fortune you intrusted to me, and has never expressed the slightest dissatisfaction. It is true that I always anticipated his wishes, and when I saw a beggar come towards the carriage, made haste to send him away satisfied before he could hold out his hand. This course of action succeeded perfectly, and I may say that as the spectacle of poverty and disease hardly ever met his lordship's sight, he has not once seemed to me to recollect his old anxiety on this point. Never have I heard him scold any one, find fault with any custom, or utter an unfavorable criticism. The ardent devotion, whose excesses you dreaded, seems to have given place to a regularity of conduct and religious observance altogether suitable to a man of the world. He had seen the most brilliant courts of Europe and the most illustrious assemblies without appearing either intoxicated or shocked by anything. His handsome face, his noble bearing and his quiet politeness have everywhere been remarked, as well as the unfailing good taste of his conversation. His habits have remained as pure as those of a young girl, though he has never shown any ill-bred prudishness. He has seen theatres, museums and public monuments, and he has conversed soberly

and judiciously on the subject of art. In short, I am wholly unable to understand the anxiety which he gave your lordships, for I have always found him a reasonable man. If there is anything extraordinary about him, it is just this moderation, this prudence, this coolness, this absence of impulses and passions, which I have never met in a young man so richly endowed by nature, birth and fortune.'

"This was, indeed, only a confirmation of the abbe's frequent letters to the family; but they had always dreaded some exaggeration on his part, and they were not relieved until he asserted the moral cure of my cousin, without fear of being contradicted by the conduct which he should show under the eyes of his relatives. They overwhelmed the abbe with presents and courtesies, and impatiently awaited Albert's return from his walk. He was long absent, and when at last he sat down to supper, they were struck by the paleness and gravity of his countenance. In the first effusion of his return, his features had expressed a gentle and deep satisfaction which could now no longer be read on them. They were astonished, and anxiously spoke to the abbe about it in an undertone. He looked at Albert, and turning about with surprise to those who had questioned him, said, 'I see nothing extraordinary in the count's face. It wears the same dignified and peaceful expression that I have always seen for the eight years that I have had the honor of accompanying him.'

"Count Christian was satisfied with this answer.

“ ‘When he left us,’ he said to his sister, ‘he was still adorned with the roses of youth, and often, alas ! the victim of a mental fever which gave resonance to his voice and fire to his eye. He has come back to us bronzed by a southern sun, worn a little by fatigue, perhaps, and wearing the gravity which befits a man of his years. Do you not think, dear sister, that he is better thus?’

“ ‘I think him very sad beneath his gravity,’ replied my good aunt, ‘and I have never seen a man of eight-and-twenty so phlegmatic and so silent ; he only answers us in monosyllables.’

“ ‘The count has always been very sparing of words,’ said the abbe.

“ ‘He was not so formerly,’ replied the canoness ; ‘if he had weeks of silence and meditation, he had days of communicativeness and hours of eloquence.’

“ ‘Never,’ said the abbe, ‘have I seen him lay aside the reserve which your excellency has noticed.’

“ ‘Did you like him better when he talked too much, and said things which frightened us?’ said Count Christian to his anxious sister ; ‘that is like a true woman !’

“ ‘But he did exist,’ said she, ‘and now he is like an inhabitant of the other world, who has no interest in the affairs of this one.’

“ ‘It is Count Albert’s invariable character,’ replied the abbe. ‘He is a reserved man, who communicates his impressions to no one, and who, if I must say so, is impressed by very few external occur-

rences. This is the case with all cool, deliberate, thoughtful people. It is his nature, and I think that if you were to try to excite him, it would only do harm to a nature which is opposed to action and all dangerous innovation.'

" 'Oh, I will swear that that is not his real character !' said the canoness.

" 'The lady canoness will change the unfavorable opinion which she is forming concerning so rare an advantage.'

" 'It is true, sister,' said the count ; 'I think the abbe is right. Has he not obtained by his care and his devotion the result which we so greatly desired ? Has he not averted the misfortunes which we dreaded ? Albert bade fair to be a spendthrift, an enthusiast, a visionary. He comes back to us all that he should be to deserve the esteem, the confidence and the consideration of his fellow-men.'

" 'But faded like an old book,' said the canoness, 'or perhaps prejudiced against everything, and despising all that is not to his mind. He did not seem glad to see us, who were so impatient for his return.' "

" 'The count was himself impatient to return,' said the abbe. 'I could see it, though he did not manifest it openly. He is so undemonstrative ! Nature has made him reserved.'

" 'Nature has made him demonstrative, on the contrary,' replied my aunt. 'He was sometimes violent, sometimes tender to excess. He would often

make me angry, but he would throw himself into my arms, and I was disarmed.'

" 'With me,' said the abbe, 'there was never anything to atone for.'

" 'Believe me, sister, it is better as it is,' said my uncle.

" 'Alas !' said the canoness, 'will he always have that face, which frightens me and wrings my heart?'

" 'It is the noble and haughty face which befits a man of his rank.'

" 'It is a face of stone !' cried the canoness. 'It seems to me that I see his mother, not as I knew her, sensible and kindly, but as she is painted, motionless and stiff in her oaken frame.'

" 'I repeat to your excellency that it has been Count Albert's habitual expression for the last eight years.'

" 'Alas ! then it is eight years since he has smiled at any one,' said my good aunt, giving free course to her tears ; 'for during the two hours that I have been watching him I have not seen the slightest smile enliven his pale and pinched lips. Ah ! I long to go to him and press him warmly to my heart, reproach him for his indifference, and scold him as I used to do, to see if he will not, as of old, throw himself sobbing on my heart.'

" 'Beware of such imprudences, dear sister,' said Count Christian, forcing her to turn away from Albert, at whom she was still looking with tearful eyes. 'Do not yield to the weakness of your maternal heart ; we

have proved only too well that excessive sensibility was the scourge of our child's life and reason. By distracting his mind, and keeping him from all lively emotion, the abbe, in accordance with our advice and that of the physicians, has succeeded in calming this agitated nature. Do not destroy his work by the caprices of a childish tenderness.'

"The canoness submitted to this reasoning, and tried to become accustomed to Albert's icy manner ; but she could not succeed, and often she would whisper in her brother's ear, 'You may say what you like, Christian, but I am afraid that they have made him stupid by treating him, not like a man, but like a sick child.'

"That evening, as they were about to separate, they embraced each other. Albert received his father's blessing respectfully, and when the canoness pressed him to her breast, he saw that she was moved and that her voice was trembling. He began to tremble also, and he tore himself quickly from her arms, as if he felt an acute pain."

"'You see, sister,' murmured the count, 'he is not accustomed to these emotions, and you hurt him.'

"At the same time, far from being reassured, and deeply moved himself, he followed Albert with his eyes, to see whether, by his manner towards the abbe, he could detect an exclusive preference for that person. But Albert bowed to his tutor with cold politeness.

"'My son,' said the count, 'I think that I have

acted according to your wishes and the promptings of your heart in begging the abbe not to leave us, as he already designed, but to remain with us as long as possible. I would not have your happiness in returning home poisoned by a regret, and I trust that your honorable friend will help us to give you this unmixed pleasure.'

"Albert only answered by a profound bow, while a strange smile passed over his face.

"'Alas !' said the canoness when he had left them, 'is it thus that he smiles now?'"

CHAPTER XXVII.

“DURING Albert’s absence, the count and the canoness had made many plans for their dear child’s future, and especially for his marriage. With his handsome face, his illustrious name, and a considerable fortune, Albert might aspire to a distinguished match. But in case a remnant of indolence or timidity should prevent him from appearing favorably in society or making a good impression, they held in reserve a young person who was as well born as he, since she was his cousin german, and bore his name — less rich than he, but an only child, and pretty as one is at sixteen, when one is fresh and adorned with what in France is called the ‘*beauté du diable*.’ This young person was Amelia, the Baroness of Rudolstadt, your humble servant and your new friend.

“‘Amelia,’ they said to each other, ‘has never seen any men. Brought up in a convent, she will no doubt be glad enough to leave it to marry. She can hardly hope for a better match; and as for the peculiarities which may still mark her husband’s character, the old familiarity of childhood, the relationship, and a few months of his society will surely overcome any repugnance to them, and induce her, if only from family pride, to bear in silence what a stranger would not, perhaps, endure.’ They were sure of my father’s

consent, for he had never wished differently from his elder brother and his sister, having, indeed, no will of his own.

“When, after a fortnight of careful examination, my uncle and aunt were compelled to admit that constant melancholy and extreme reserve formed the basis of my cousin’s character, they understood that this last representative of the family would never reflect any glory upon it by his personal achievements. He showed no inclination to play any brilliant part in the world, either in the army, in diplomacy, or in the civil service. To all their suggestions, he replied with a resigned air that he would carry out the wishes of the family, but that for himself he desired neither wealth nor glory. After all, this indolent nature was but an exaggerated reproduction of that of his father, — that calm man, whose patience borders on apathy, and whose modesty is a sort of abnegation. What gives to my uncle a character which his son does not possess is his strong sense of his duty to society. His father and mine had borne arms under Montecuculli against Turenne. They had brought to the war a sort of religious feeling, inspired by the imperial majesty. This age, which is more enlightened, has deprived kings of this aureole, and the youth of to-day no longer allow themselves to believe in either crown or tiara. When my uncle attempted to revive the ancient chivalric ardor in his son, he found that his arguments had no force in the eyes of this contemptuous reasoner.

“ ‘Since this is the case,’ said my uncle and aunt, ‘let us not thwart him. Let us not endanger this questionable cure which has given us a lifeless man instead of a furious one. Let him live peacefully in his own way and be a studious philosopher, as some of his ancestors have been, or an enthusiastic sportsman, like our brother Frederick, or a just and beneficent master, as I strive to be. Let him henceforth lead the quiet and inoffensive life of an old man ; he will be the first of the Rudolstadts who has had no youth. But as he must not be the last of his race, let us make haste to marry him, that the inheritors of our name may speedily fill up this blank in the glories of our family. Who can tell? Perhaps the generous blood of his ancestors is reposing in his veins by the will of Providence, that it may revive prouder and more fiery in the veins of his descendants.’

“So it was decided that they should propose marriage to my Cousin Albert. The matter was broached gently at first, and when they found him as little disposed to this step as to any other, they spoke more seriously and earnestly. He objected his timidity and awkwardness with women. ‘It is certain,’ said my aunt, ‘that in my youth so serious a lover as Albert would have frightened me rather than attracted me, and that I would not have exchanged my hump for his society.’

“ ‘Then,’ said my uncle, ‘we must fall back on our last resource, and marry him to Amelia. He knew her as a child, he regards her as a sister, and he will

be less timid with her. Besides, her character is vivacious and energetic, and she may correct, by her brightness, the melancholy which seems to be growing on him more and more.'

"Albert showed no repugnance to the project, and without acquiescing positively, consented to see me and know me. It was agreed that I should not be informed of anything, to save me from the mortification of a possible refusal on his part. They wrote to my father, and as soon as they received his assent, began to take the steps needful to obtain from the pope the dispensation which our consanguinity made necessary. At the same time, my father withdrew me from the convent, and one fine morning we arrived at the Castle of the Giants, — I very glad to breathe the free air and impatient to see my betrothed, my good father full of hope, and fancying that he had concealed from me a project which he had unwittingly fully revealed to me on the journey.

"The first things which struck me in Albert were his handsome face and his dignified bearing. I confess, dear Nina, that my heart beat violently when he kissed my hand, and for some days I was charmed by his look and his slightest word. His serious manner did not displease me, and he did not seem the least in the world constrained with me. He called me 'thee' and 'thou' as in our childhood, and when he wished to correct himself, for fear of committing a breach of the proprieties, our family authorized him, and almost begged him, to continue his old familiarity with

me. My gayety sometimes made him smile, and my good aunt, transported with joy, ascribed to me a cure which she believed to be radical. In short, he treated me with the kindness and gentleness that one has for a child, and I was satisfied with that, thinking that he would soon pay more attention to the sprightliness of my manner, and the charming costumes which I wore to please him.

“But I soon had the mortification to see that he cared little for the one and did not even notice the other. One day my aunt called his attention to a charming blue gown which I had worn, and which fitted me to perfection. He asserted that it was red. The abbe, his tutor, who always had a honeyed compliment at the end of his tongue, and who wished to give him a lesson in gallantry, cried that he could easily understand why Count Albert did not notice the color of my gowns. It was an excellent opportunity for Albert to say something pretty to me about the roses on my cheeks or the gold in my hair; but he contented himself by remarking dryly to the abbe that he was entirely competent to tell the color of my gowns, and that this one was blood red.

“I do not know why this rudeness and this oddity gave me a shudder. I glanced at Albert, and saw a look in his eyes which frightened me. From that day I began to fear rather than to love him. Soon I did not love him at all, and now I neither fear nor love him. I simply pity him. You will see why, little by little, and you will understand me.

“The next day we were to go to Tauss, the nearest town, to do some shopping. I anticipated a great deal of pleasure from this excursion, for Albert and I were to go on horseback. I was dressed and waiting for him. The carriages were ready in the courtyard, but he had not yet appeared. His valet said that he had knocked at his door at the usual hour. They sent him to see if Albert was getting ready. It was one of my cousin’s fancies always to dress alone, and never to allow a servant in his room until he had come out of it himself. But it was in vain that they knocked ; there was no answer. His father, uneasy at this silence, went up to his room, and could neither open the door, which was locked on the inside, nor obtain any reply. They began to be greatly frightened, when the abbe remarked tranquilly that Count Albert was subject to long fits of heavy sleep, and that when he was suddenly aroused from them he was nervous and unwell for several days.

“‘But this is a real disease,’ said the canoness anxiously.

“‘I do not think so,’ replied the abbe. ‘The physicians whom I called in when he was sleeping in this way found no symptoms of fever, and attributed his exhaustion to the effects of excessive labor or reflection. They advised me not to oppose this desire for rest and forgetfulness.’

“‘And this happens frequently?’ asked my uncle.

“‘I have not noticed the phenomenon more than five or six times in eight years,’ replied the abbe, ‘and

having never disturbed him, I have never observed any unfortunate results.'

"Does it last long?' I asked, very impatiently.

"That,' said the abbe, 'depends on the length of the sleeplessness which has preceded or occasioned this fatigue; but it is impossible to tell, for the count never remembers the cause of these attacks, or will not reveal it. He is a remarkably hard worker, and conceals it with rare modesty.'

"Then he is very learned?' I said.

"He is extremely learned.'

"And he never displays his learning?'

"He hides it, and is hardly conscious of it himself.'

"Then of what value is it?'

"Genius is like beauty,' replied this Jesuitical courtier, looking at me gallantly; 'both are gifts of Heaven which evoke neither pride nor emotion in those who possess them.'

"I understood the implied lesson, and was only the more angry, as you may suppose. They resolved to wait till my cousin should awake before going out; but when I saw no signs of him at the end of a couple of hours, I went and took off my handsome riding-habit, and sat down at my embroidery frame, where I broke a great deal of silk and dropped many stitches. I was furious at the impertinence of Albert, who forgot himself over his books when he was to ride with me, and was now enjoying a peaceful slumber while I waited for him. The day drew on, and we had to

give up the excursion. My father, trusting to the abbe's account, took his gun and went out to shoot a hare or two. My aunt, more anxious, went upstairs more than twenty times to listen at her nephew's door, without being able to hear even the sound of his breathing. The poor woman was greatly distressed at my anger. As for my uncle, he took a book of devotion to occupy his mind, and began to read it in a corner of the drawing-room with a resignation which made me want to leap from the window. At last, towards evening, my aunt came in quite joyful, and told us that she had heard Albert get up and begin dressing. The abbe advised us not to appear anxious or surprised, not to question the young count, and to try to divert him if he showed any annoyance at his misadventure.

“ ‘ But if my cousin is not ill, he must be a maniac ! ’
I cried, a little carried away.

“ At this hard speech I saw my uncle's face change, and I was instantly filled with remorse. But when Albert came in without apologizing to any one, and without at all appearing to suspect our annoyance, I was enraged, and received him very coldly. He did not even notice it, but appeared absorbed in his reflections.

“ That evening my father thought that a little music would enliven him. I had not yet sung for Albert, for my harp had only arrived the day before. I will not boast to you, learned Porporina, of knowing a great deal about music, but you will see that I have

a pretty voice, and am not lacking in natural taste. I had to be pressed, for I felt more like crying than singing. Albert did not say a word to encourage me. At last I yielded ; but I sang very badly, and Albert had the rudeness to go out at the end of a few bars, as if my voice set his teeth on edge. It took all the strength of my pride to prevent me from bursting into tears, and to enable me to finish my air without breaking the strings of my harp. My aunt had followed her nephew, my father was asleep, my uncle was waiting near the door for his sister to return and tell him about his son. The abbe alone remained to pay me some compliments which irritated me more than the indifference of the others.

“‘It seems,’ I said to him, ‘that my cousin is not fond of music.’

“‘On the contrary, he is very fond of it,’ he replied ; ‘but it depends’—

“‘It depends on how it is sung?’ I said, interrupting him.

“‘It depends,’ he replied, without being in the least disconcerted, ‘upon the condition of his mind. Sometimes music does him good, sometimes harm. You must, I am sure, have moved him so deeply that he feared he could not contain himself. His departure is more flattering for you than the highest eulogiums.’

“There was something so sly and so sarcastic in these compliments that I hated the abbe. But I was soon freed from his presence, as you will learn.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“THE next day my aunt, who rarely speaks unless her heart is deeply moved, unfortunately engaged in a conversation with the abbe and the chaplain. Besides her family affections, which almost wholly absorb her, there is but one thing for which she cares ; that is, her family pride. Consequently she did not fail to indulge it by discoursing about her genealogy, and by proving to the two priests that our family is the purest, the most illustrious and the most excellent in all Germany, especially on the female side. The abbe was listening to her patiently and the chaplain reverently, when Albert, who did not seem to be listening at all, interrupted her with some animation.

“‘It seems to me, my dear aunt,’ said he, ‘that you are somewhat mistaken about the excellence of our family. It is true that the nobility and the titles of our ancestors date far enough back ; but a family which loses its name, which, in a certain sense, abjures it, to take that of a woman alien in race and religion, gives up all right to boast of its ancient virtue and its fidelity to the glory of its country.’

“This remark greatly annoyed my aunt, but as the abbe had appeared to prick up his ears, she felt that she ought to reply to it.

“‘I do not agree with you, my dear child,’ said

she. 'Illustrious families have often been known to make themselves still more illustrious, and very properly, by adding to their own name that of a maternal branch, that the heirs may not be deprived of the honor which belongs to them as being descended from a woman of glorious parentage.'

"'But this rule does not apply to our case,' replied Albert, with a tenacity which was unusual to him. 'I can understand the union of two illustrious names. I think it very proper for a woman to transmit to her children her own name, joined to that of her husband. But the entire suppression of the man's name seems to me an outrage on the part of her who asks it, a cowardice on the part of him who submits to it.'

"'You are recalling very ancient history, Albert,' said the canoness, with a deep sigh, 'and you apply the rule more wrongly than I. The abbe might think, to listen to you, that one of our male ancestors had been guilty of a cowardice; and as you know so well things of which I thought you ignorant, you should not have made such a remark about political events which happened long before our time, thank Heaven!'

"'If my remark disturbs you, I will recount the facts, so as to free our ancestor Withold, the last Count of Podiebrad, of any injurious imputation. This seems to interest my cousin,' he added, seeing me listen, with wide-eyed surprise, at his engaging in a controversy so foreign to his philosophic ideas and

habitual silence. 'You must know, Amelia, that our great-grandfather Wratisslaw was not more than four years old when his mother, Ulrica, of Rudolstadt, thought it her duty to deprive him of his own name, the name of his fathers, which was Podiebrad, and to inflict upon him the Saxon name which you and I bear to-day, — you without blushing for it; I without being proud of it.'

"'It is quite useless,' said my Uncle Christian, who appeared very ill at ease, 'to recall events which happened so long ago.'

"'It seems to me,' said Albert, 'that my aunt went much farther back into the past when she was recounting the mighty deeds of the Rudolstadts, and I do not see why it should be in bad taste for one of us to speak of events which are hardly a hundred and twenty years old, if he happens to recollect that he is by birth a Bohemian and not a Saxon, and that his name is Podiebrad and not Rudolstadt.'

"'I knew,' said the abbe, who had been listening to Albert with a certain interest, 'that your family was allied in the past to the royal house of George Podiebrad, but I did not know that you were so directly descended from it as to bear its name.'

"'My aunt, who knows how to construct family trees, has seen fit to cut down in her own mind the ancient and venerable one from whose stock we are sprung. But a family tree, on which our glorious but gloomy history has been written in letters of blood, still stands on the neighboring mountain.'

“As Albert became more excited as he spoke, and as my uncle’s face grew darker and darker, the abbe attempted to change the conversation, although his curiosity was greatly excited. But I was too much interested to let it drop.

“‘What do you mean, Albert?’ I cried, drawing near him.

“‘No Podiebrad should be ignorant of what I mean,’ he replied. ‘I mean that the old oak of the Rock of Terror, which you see every day from your window, Amelia, and under which I advise you never to sit down without commending your soul to God, bore, three hundred years ago, somewhat heavier fruit than the dried-up acorns which it can hardly bring forth to-day.’

“‘It is a frightful narrative,’ said the appalled chaplain, ‘and I do not know who can have told it to you.’

“‘The traditions of the country, and perhaps something still more trustworthy,’ replied Albert; ‘for it is useless to burn family archives and historical documents, chaplain; it is useless to educate children in ignorance of the past, to impose silence on the simple by sophistry, on the weak by threats; for neither the fear of despotism nor the dread of hell can silence the thousand voices of the past which we hear on every side. No, no! Terrible as they are, they speak too loud for a priest to silence them! They speak to our souls in sleep by the mouth of the spirits who rise to warn us, and to our ears in every

sound of Nature ; they issue even from the trunks of trees, like the voices of gods in the sacred woods, to relate to us the crimes, the exploits and the misfortunes of our fathers.'

" 'And why, my poor child,' said the canoness, 'do you fill your mind with these bitter thoughts and mournful memories?'

" 'It is your genealogies, aunt, — the excursion which you made into the past ages, — which revived in me the memory of the fifteen monks hanged upon the branches of the oak by the hands of one of my ancestors, — oh ! the greatest, the most persevering, the most terrible ; him whom they called the redoubtable blind man, the invincible John Ziska the Calixtine !'

" 'The sublime and abhorred name of the chief of the Taborites, a sect who, in the Hussite War, excelled the other reformers in energy, bravery, and cruelty, fell like lightning upon the abbe and the chaplain. The latter crossed himself, while my aunt pushed back her chair, which was close to Albert's.

" 'Good Heaven !' she cried, 'what does the child mean ? Do not listen to him, abbe. Never, no, never has our family had connection or association with the reprobate whose abominable name he has just pronounced.'

" 'Speak for yourself, aunt,' said Albert, energetically, 'you are a Rudolstadt at heart, though in fact you are a Podiebrad. But as for me, I have in my veins a few drops more of Bohemian, and a few drops less of alien blood. My mother had neither Saxons

nor Bavarians nor Prussians in her family tree. She was of pure Slav blood. And as you do not seem to care much for a nobility to which you do not belong, I, who am proud of my nobility, will tell you, if you do not know it, will remind you, if you have forgotten it, that John Ziska left a daughter, who married a Prachalitz; and that my mother, being a Prachalitz, descended in direct line from John Ziska by the female side, as you are descended from the Rudolstadt, aunt !'

" 'This is a dream, a mistake, Albert !'

" 'No, dear aunt ; I leave it to the chaplain, who is a truthful and God-fearing man. He has had in his hands the parchments which proved it.'

" 'I ?' cried the chaplain, pale as death.

" 'You may admit it without blushing before the abbe,' replied Albert with bitter irony, 'since you did your duty as a Catholic priest and an Austrian subject by burning them the day after my mother's death.'

" 'This action, ordained by my conscience, had none but God to witness !' said the chaplain, still paler yet. 'Count Albert, who could have revealed to you' —

" 'I have already told you, chaplain — the voice which speaks yet louder than a priest's.'

" 'What voice, Albert ?' I asked, deeply interested.

" 'The voice which speaks in sleep,' said Albert.

" 'But that explains nothing,' said Count Christian, sad and thoughtful.

“‘The voice of blood, father!’ said Albert in a tone which made us all tremble.

“‘Alas!’ said my uncle, clasping his hands, ‘these are the same dreams, the same imaginations, which tormented his poor mother. She must have spoken of all this before the child during her illness,’ said he, leaning towards my aunt, ‘and his mind must have been impressed by them then.’

“‘Impossible, brother!’ replied the canoness; ‘Albert was not three years old when he lost his mother.’

“‘Rather,’ said the chaplain, in a low voice, ‘must there have remained in the house some of those accursed heretical writings, filled with lies and impiety, which she preserved from family pride, but which she sacrificed in her last hours.’

“‘No, none of them remain,’ said Albert, who had not lost one of the chaplain’s words, although the good man had spoken low, and Albert, who was walking about excitedly, was at the opposite end of the large drawing-room. ‘You well know, chaplain, that you destroyed them all, and that you searched in every part of her chamber the day after her death.’

“‘Who can have assisted your memory in this way or led it astray, Albert?’ asked Count Christian severely. ‘What faithless or imprudent servant has troubled your young mind by the account, no doubt exaggerated, of these domestic incidents?’

“‘Not one of them, father. I swear it upon my religion and my conscience.’

“‘The enemy of mankind has had a hand in this,’ said the frightened chaplain.

“‘It would be more charitable and more Christian to think,’ remarked the abbe, ‘that Count Albert has an extraordinary memory, and that events which do not usually impress children of his tender years have remained graven on his mind. What I have seen of his rare intelligence makes me believe that his reason developed very early; and as for his faculty for remembering, it has often appeared to me prodigious.’

“‘It appears prodigious to you because you are absolutely devoid of it,’ said Albert, dryly. ‘For instance, do you recollect what you did in the year 1619, after Withold Podiebrad, the Protestant, the valiant, the faithful (your ancestor, dear aunt), the last who bore our name, had dyed with his blood the Rock of Terror? I would wager that you have forgotten what you did on this occasion, abbe.’

“‘I have entirely forgotten it, I confess,’ replied the abbe, with a mocking smile, which was not in good taste at a moment when it was becoming evident to us all that Albert was completely wandering.

“‘Well, I will recall it to you,’ Albert went on. ‘You quickly advised the imperial soldiers who had committed the deed to fly or conceal themselves, because the workmen of Pilsen, who had the courage to avow themselves Protestants, and who adored Withold, were coming to avenge the death of their master, and preparing to cut them to pieces. Then you came and found my ancestor, Ulrica, Withold’s

trembling and frightened widow, and you promised to make her peace with the Emperor Ferdinand II., and to preserve her estates, her titles, her liberty, and the lives of her children, if she would follow your advice and pay you for your services. She consented. Her maternal love prompted this act of weakness. She did not respect the martyrdom of her noble husband. She had been a Catholic, and had abjured only for love of him. She could not accept poverty, proscription, and persecution to preserve for her children a faith which her husband had just sealed with his blood, and a name which he had rendered more illustrious than all his ancestors, — Hussites, Calixtines, Taborites, Orphans, United Brethren, or Lutherans. [All these names, dear Porporina, are those of various sects which united the heresy of John Huss to that of Luther, and to which our branch of the Podiebrads had probably belonged.] In short,' Albert went on, 'the Saxon woman was afraid, and yielded. You took possession of the castle, you sent away the imperial troops, you protected our estates. You made an immense auto-da-fe of our title-deeds and our archives. That is why my aunt, happily for her, cannot reconstruct the family tree of the Podiebrads, and is reduced to feeding on the more digestible pasture of the Rudolstadt. As the price of your services, you were made rich — very rich. Three months afterwards, Ulrica was allowed to go to Vienna to kiss the hand of the emperor, who graciously permitted her to denationalize her children, to have them brought

up by you in the Roman faith, and to enlist them later under the same flag against which their father and their ancestors had fought so valiantly. We were enrolled, my sons and I, in the ranks of Austrian tyranny,' —

“‘Your sons and you!’ cried my aunt, despairingly, seeing that he was all astray.

“‘Yes, my sons Sigismund and Rudolph,’ replied Albert, very seriously.

“‘They are the names of my father and uncle,’ said Count Christian. ‘Albert, what are you thinking about? Come to yourself, my son. More than a century has passed since these painful events were ordained by Providence.’

“Albert would not admit that he was wrong. He thought, and tried to make us believe, that he was Wratislaw, the son of Withold, and the first of the Podiebrads who bore the maternal name of Rudolstadt. He told us the story of his childhood, the distinct recollection that he had of Count Withold’s death, which he attributed wholly to the Jesuit Ditmar (who, according to him, was none other than the abbe, his tutor), the deep hatred that, in his childhood, he had felt for Ditmar, for Austria, for the imperialists, and for the Catholics. After that, his recollections appeared to become confused, and he added a thousand incomprehensible things concerning eternal life and the reappearance of men upon earth, quoting that article of the Hussite belief which declared that John Huss was to return to Bohemia a

hundred years after his death and finish his work ; claiming that the prediction had been realized, since Luther was John Huss resuscitated. What he said was a mixture of heresy, superstition, obscure metaphysics and poetical raving ; and he declaimed it all with such an appearance of conviction, with such detailed, exact and interesting reminiscences of what he insisted that he had seen, not only in the person of Wratislaw, but also in that of John Ziska, and I know not how many others, who, he asserted, had been his own embodiments during the past, that we were aghast at hearing him, and not one of us had the courage to interrupt or contradict him. My uncle and aunt, to whom his derangement caused frightful suffering, for it seemed blasphemous to them, wished at least to understand it thoroughly ; for it was the first time that it had been displayed openly, and it was necessary to know its cause, that an attempt might be made to conquer it. The abbe tried to turn the affair into a jest, and make us believe that Count Albert had a sarcastic bent, which caused him to take pleasure in mystifying us with his incredible learning.

“The canoness, whose ardent devotion is not far removed from superstition, and who was beginning to believe implicitly what her nephew said, received the abbe’s suggestions very coldly, and advised him to keep his jesting explanations for a more festive occasion. Then she made a violent effort to induce Albert to retract the errors which crowded his brain.

“‘Take care, aunt,’ cried Albert, impatiently, ‘that I do not tell you who you are. I have never been willing to know, but something warns me that now the Saxon Ulrica is somewhere near me.’

“‘What, my poor boy!’ said she, ‘do you think that that prudent and devoted ancestor, who was able to preserve the lives of her children, the inheritance of her descendants, and the lands and honors which they enjoy, lives again in me? Well, Albert, I love you so much that for you I would do more. I would give my life, if at that cost I could calm your troubled spirit.’

“Albert looked at her for some moments with an expression which was both severe and tender. At last he drew near to her, knelt at her feet, and said, —

“‘No, no! You are an angel, and you once partook of the communion in the wooden cup of the Hussites. But the Saxon is here, nevertheless, and I have heard her voice several times to-day.’

“‘Let us suppose that I am she, Albert,’ said I, attempting to divert him, ‘and do not blame me too much for not having given you to the scaffold in 1619.’

“‘You, my mother!’ said he, looking at me with a frightful expression; ‘do not say that, for I could never forgive you. God has caused me to be born again from the womb of a stronger woman; he has strengthened me with the blood of John Ziska, and restored to me my own substance, which had gone astray, I know not how. Amelia, do not look at me;

above all, do not speak to me ! It is your voice which causes me all the pain I feel to-day.'

"As he said this, Albert went out hurriedly, leaving us in consternation at the dreadful disclosures which he had just made to us of the derangement of his intellect.

"It was then two o'clock. We had dined quietly, and Albert had drank nothing but water, so that we could not hope that his madness was the effect of intoxication. My aunt and the chaplain rose at once to follow him and care for him, thinking that he must be very ill. But strange to say, Albert had already disappeared, as if by enchantment. They could not find him in his own room or in that of his mother — where he would often lock himself up — or anywhere else in the castle. They sought for him in the garden, in the preserves, in the neighboring woods, and upon the mountains. Nobody had seen him, high or low. His footprints were not visible anywhere. That day and night went by in this way. No one went to bed, and the servants were afoot till day-break, seeking him with torches.

"The whole family betook itself to prayer. We passed the next day in the same anxiety, and the night which followed in the same consternation. I cannot tell you what a terror I felt, — I, who had never suffered in my life, or been frightened at domestic occurrences of such importance. I believed seriously that Albert had either killed himself or fled forever, and I was seized with convulsions and a violent fever.

I still retained traces of my love amid the fright which so strange and awful a being inspired in me. My father still had strength to go hunting, fancying that he might find Albert in the depths of the wood. My poor aunt was overwhelmed with grief, but she remained active and courageous, taking care of me, and endeavoring to reassure every one. My uncle spent his whole time in prayer, night and day. When I saw his faith and his stoical submission to the will of Heaven, I was sorry that I was not religious.

“The abbe affected some sorrow, but pretended to feel no anxiety. It was true, he said, that Albert had never before disappeared in this way; but he often felt the need of solitude and contemplation. He thought that the only remedy for these singular symptoms was never to thwart them, and to appear not to pay too much attention to them. The truth is, that this scheming and profoundly selfish man had cared only for the large salary attached to his position as tutor, and had made his engagement last as long as possible by deceiving the family in regard to the good results of his efforts. Occupied with his business and pleasures, he had abandoned Albert to his own devices. Perhaps he had often seen him ill, often excited. He had undoubtedly left his fancies unchecked. One thing is certain, and that is that he had had the adroitness to conceal Albert’s aberrations from every one who could have told us of them; for in all the letters which my uncle received concerning his son, there was never anything but praise for his

bearing, and compliments on his personal appearance. Albert had nowhere the reputation of an invalid or a madman. Whatever it may have been, his inward life during those eight years has remained to us an impenetrable secret. The abbe, seeing that he had not reappeared at the end of three days, and fearing that he himself might suffer some disadvantage from this occurrence, set out in search of him, saying that he would look for him in Prague, where he had no doubt been drawn by the desire to seek some rare book.

“‘He is like those learned men,’ he said, ‘who become absorbed in their studies, and forget the whole world in satisfying their innocent passion.’

“The abbe departed, and never returned.

“After seven days of mortal anguish, and just as we were beginning to despair, my aunt was passing before Albert’s room about evening, when she saw the door wide open and Albert sitting in his chair, patting his dog, which had accompanied him on his mysterious journey. His garments were neither soiled nor torn, only the silver lace upon them was somewhat blackened, as if he had come from a damp place, or had been spending his nights in the open air. His shoes did not indicate that he had walked much, but his hair and his beard showed that he had long been careless of his person. Since that day he has always refused to shave or to wear powder like other men; that is why you took him for a ghost.

“My aunt sprang toward him with a great cry.

“‘What is the matter, dear aunt?’ he said, as he kissed her hand. ‘One would say that you had not seen me for an age.’

“‘But, my poor child!’ she cried, ‘it is seven days since you left us without saying a word, — seven mortal days, seven dreadful nights, that we have spent in seeking, weeping and praying for you!’

“‘Seven days?’ said Albert, looking at her with surprise, ‘seven hours, you mean, dear aunt, for I went out this morning for a walk, and have returned in time to sup with you. How could you have been so anxious about so short an absence?’

“‘Oh, certainly,’ said she, fearing to aggravate his ill by revealing it to him; ‘my tongue slipped. I meant to say seven hours. I was anxious because you are not accustomed to such long walks, and then I had a bad dream last night. I was very foolish.’

“‘Dear aunt! excellent friend!’ said Albert, as he covered her hands with kisses, ‘you love me like a little child! I hope my father did not share your anxiety.’

“‘Not at all. He is waiting for you to join him at supper. You must be very hungry?’

“‘Not in the least. I dined very well.’

“‘Where, how, Albert?’

“‘Here, this morning, with you, dear aunt. You have not quite recovered yourself yet, I see. Oh, how grieved I am that I caused you such a fright! How could I have guessed it?’

“‘You know that I am naturally nervous. But

where have you eaten and slept since you have been away?’

“‘How could I need to eat or sleep since this morning?’

“‘You do not feel ill?’

“‘Not the least in the world.’

“‘Nor tired? You must have walked a great deal and climbed mountains. It is very hard work. Where have you been?’

“Albert placed his hand over his eyes, as if to recollect, but he could not tell.

“‘I confess,’ he said, ‘that I really do not know. I was greatly preoccupied. I walked without seeing anything, as I used to do when a child. Do you not remember? I could never tell you when you asked me.’

“‘And during your travels, did you not pay more attention to what you saw?’

“‘Sometimes, but not always. I remember many things, but I have forgotten many others, thank God!’

“‘And why thank God?’

“‘Because one sees frightful things in this world,’ said he, rising with a sombre expression which my aunt had never seen before.

“She saw that it would not do to make him talk any longer, and hurried to tell my uncle that his son was found again. Nobody in the house knew it, for no one had seen him come in. His return had been as mysterious as his departure.

“The courage which had supported my poor uncle in misfortune failed him in his first moment of happi-

ness. He lost consciousness, and when Albert appeared, his face was more deeply marked than his son's. Albert, who since his long journey had not appeared to observe the emotions of those about him, seemed that day wholly changed and different. He was very tender towards his father, became anxious at seeing the alteration in his face, and wished to know the reason. But when they tried to hint it to him, he could not understand them, and all his replies were made with a sincerity and assurance which proved that he was entirely ignorant of where he had been during the seven days of his absence."

"What you are telling me seems like a dream," said Consuelo, "and makes me feel more like talking than sleeping, dear baroness. How is it possible for a man to live seven days without being conscious of anything?"

"This is nothing in comparison with what I shall have to tell you; and until you have seen for yourself that I am extenuating rather than exaggerating, you will find it hard to believe me. Even I, who repeat to you what I have seen, sometimes ask myself whether Albert is a sorcerer, or is making sport of us. But it is very late, and I am really afraid of wearying you."

"It is I who am wearying you," replied Consuelo, "you must be tired with talking. Let us postpone the rest of this incredible story until to-morrow night, if you like."

"Very good, then, till to-morrow," said the young baroness, kissing her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE story to which Consuelo had been listening, and which was indeed incredible, kept her from sleeping for a long while. The night, which was dark, rainy, and filled with strange noises, also helped to inspire her with a superstitious dread which she had never before known. "Is there, then," she said to herself, "an incomprehensible fatality which hangs over certain beings? In what way has God been offended by this young girl, who has just been telling me so frankly of her wounded vanity and her vanished dreams? What have I done myself, for my only love to be so terribly wounded and broken? And, alas! what has this unhappy Albert of Rudolstadt done, that he should lose consciousness and the power of directing his own life? Has Providence come to abhor Anzoleto, that it abandons him thus to his wicked instincts and the power of temptation?"

Overcome at last by fatigue, she fell asleep and lost herself in a series of disconnected and endless dreams. Two or three times she awoke and went to sleep again without being able to determine where she was, thinking herself still on her journey. Porpora, Anzoleto, Count Zustiniani and Corilla passed in succession before her eyes, reproaching her with some crime for which she was undergoing punishment, but which she

could not remember having committed. But all these visions vanished before that of Count Albert, who continually reappeared before her, with his black beard, his staring eyes and his mourning garments set off with gold, like a pall besprinkled with tears.

When she awoke at last, she found Amelia beside her bed, elegantly dressed and fresh and smiling.

"Do you know, dear Porporina," said the young baroness, as she kissed her brow, "that there is something strange about you? I seem destined to live with extraordinary beings, for certainly you are one. I have been watching you asleep for a quarter of an hour, to see whether you were handsomer than I. I confess that this gave me some anxiety, and that in spite of the fact that I have wholly resigned all claim on Albert, I should be a little piqued if he were to take an interest in you. What would you have? He is the only man here, and thus far I have been the only woman. Now that there are two of us, we shall have a bone to pick together if you eclipse me too much."

"You are laughing at me," said Consuelo. "It is hardly generous of you. But will you be good enough to stop your teasing, and tell me what there is so extraordinary about me? Perhaps my ugliness has suddenly come back. I suppose it must be that."

"I will tell you the truth, Nina. When I first looked at you this morning, your pallor and your half-opened eyes, which seemed rather staring than asleep, and your thin arm which hung out of the bed, made

me feel relieved for a moment. Then, as I looked at you, I became almost frightened by your immobility and your truly royal attitude. Your arm is that of a queen, and there is something imposing in your calmness which I cannot understand. Now I am beginning to find you horribly beautiful, and yet your look is mild. Tell me what sort of being you are. You attract and frighten me at the same time, and I am ashamed of all the nonsense I told you last night. You have confided to me nothing about yourself, and yet you know all my faults already."

"If I have the air of a queen, which I should never have suspected," said Consuelo with a sad smile, "it must be the pitiful air of a dethroned queen. As for my beauty, it has always seemed to me very doubtful; and as to the opinion which I have of you, dear baroness, it is altogether in your favor, from your frankness and your goodness."

"I certainly am frank; but are you, Nina? Yes, you seem noble and loyal, but are you communicative? I do not think so."

"Surely it was not for me to take the initiative, you must admit that. It was for you, who are the protectress and mistress of my destiny at present, to make the first advances."

"You are right. But your wise look frightens me. If I appear giddy, you will not scold me, will you?"

"I have no right to do that. I am your music teacher, and nothing more. Besides, a poor child of the people like me should always keep her place."

"You, a child of the people, Porporina? Oh, that is not true! it is impossible! I should take you rather for the mysterious scion of some race of princes. What did your mother do?"

"She was a singer, like me."

"And your father?"

Consuelo was taken aback. She had not prepared all her replies to the indiscreet questions of the little baroness. The truth is that she had never heard her father spoken of, and had never thought of asking if she had one.

"Come!" said Amelia laughing. "That is it, I am sure. Your father was some Spanish grandee or some doge of Venice."

This manner of speaking seemed to Consuelo trifling and unkind.

"So," said she, "an honest workman or a poor artist would not have the right to transmit any natural gifts to his offspring? A child of the people must absolutely be coarse and ill-shapen?"

"That is an epigram for my Aunt Wenceslawa," said the baroness, laughing still louder. "Come, dear Nina, forgive me if I have made you a little angry, and allow me to build in my mind a fine romance about you. But make your toilet quickly, my child, for the bell will soon ring, and my aunt would let the whole family die of hunger rather than have breakfast served without you. I will help you to open your trunks; give me your keys. I am sure that you have brought the prettiest toilets imaginable

from Venice, and that you will show me all the latest fashions. I have lived so long in this land of savages ! ”

Consuelo, who was putting up her hair, gave her the keys without listening to her, and Amelia hastened to open a trunk which she expected to find full of feminine finery ; but to her surprise she found only a mass of old music, printed sheets half effaced by use, and manuscripts which appeared undecipherable.

“ Ah, what is all this ? ” she cried, as she quickly wiped her pretty fingers. “ This is a singular wardrobe, my dear.”

“ Those are my treasures ; treat them with respect, dear baroness,” replied Consuelo. “ Some of them are autographs of great masters, and I would rather lose my voice than not return them to Porpora, who intrusted them to me.”

Amelia opened a second trunk, and found it filled with ruled paper, musical treatises, and other works on composition, harmony, and counterpoint.

“ Ah, I understand ! ” said she laughing. “ This is your jewel-case.”

“ I have no other,” replied Consuelo, “ and I hope that you will often make use of it.”

“ Good ! I see that you will be a strict mistress. But may I ask you, without offence, where you have put your gowns ? ”

“ There, in that little box,” said Consuelo, going to fetch it, and showing the baroness a simple black-silk dress, carefully folded.

"Is that all?" asked Amelia.

"That is all," said Consuelo, "except my travelling-dress. In a few days I will make another black gown like the first one, to have something to change."

"Ah, dear child! then you are in mourning?"

"Perhaps, signora," replied Consuelo gravely.

"Then I beg your pardon. I ought to have understood from your manner that you had some sorrow in your heart, and I like you better so. We will sympathize more quickly, for I too have much to make me sad, and I might well be wearing mourning for the husband they intended for me. Ah, dear Nina, do not be angry at my gayety! It is often an effort to hide profound distress."

They kissed each other, and went down to the drawing-room, where the family was awaiting them.

Consuelo saw at once that her modest black dress and her white fichu, fastened at her chin with a jet pin, gave the canoness a very favorable opinion of her. Count Christian was a little less embarrassed, and quite as affable as he had been the night before. Baron Frederick, who had abstained from hunting that day through courtesy, could not find a word to say to her, although he had prepared a thousand graceful speeches about the good which she had come to do his daughter. But he sat beside her at table, and busied himself in serving her with such elaborate care that he had not time to satisfy his own appetite. The chaplain asked her in what order the Patriarch made the procession in Venice, and questioned her

concerning the wealth and the adornments of the churches. He saw by her replies that she had visited them assiduously, and when he found that she had learned to sing in church, he conceived a great regard for her.

As for Count Albert, Consuelo had scarcely dared to look at him, precisely because he was the only one who excited a lively curiosity in her. She had glanced at him in a mirror as she passed through the drawing-room, and had seen that he was rather carefully dressed, though still in black. He had the bearing of a nobleman; but his long hair and his beard, together with his dark and yellowish complexion, gave him the appearance of having the pensive but neglected head of a handsome fisherman of the Adriatic set upon the shoulders of a lord.

Nevertheless, the sonority of his voice, which pleased Consuelo's musical ear, emboldened her enough to look at him. She was surprised to find that he had the look and manner of a perfectly sensible being. He spoke little, but judiciously; and when she rose from the table, he offered her his hand without looking at her (he had not done her this honor since the evening before), but with perfect ease and politeness. She trembled in all her limbs when she placed her hand in that of the hero of the stories and dreams of the preceding night. She expected to find it cold like that of a corpse, but it was soft and warm, like that of a healthy man. Consuelo could hardly tell this, indeed. Her suppressed emotion gave her a sort of

vertigo, and Amelia's look, which followed all her movements, would have disconcerted her completely if she had not called to her aid all the strength which she felt she needed to preserve her dignity towards this mischievous young girl. She returned the profound bow which Count Albert made her as he conducted her to a seat, and not a word or a look passed between them.

"Do you know, faithless Porporina," said Amelia to her companion, as she sat down close beside her, that she might whisper to her easily, "that you have made a marvellous impression on my cousin?"

"I do not see much sign of it so far," replied Consuelo.

"That is because you do not condescend to notice his manner towards me. For a year he has not once offered me his hand, to lead me to table or from it, yet he does it most gracefully with you! This is evidently one of his lucid intervals. One would say that you had brought him health and reason. But do not trust to appearances, Nina. It will be with you as it has been with me. After three days of politeness, he will not even recollect that you exist."

"I see that I must become accustomed to your jesting," said Consuelo.

"Is it not true, dear aunt," said Amelia in a low voice to the canoness, who had come and sat down beside them, "that my cousin is altogether charming to dear Porporina?"

"Do not laugh at him, Amelia," replied Wences-

lawa gently. "Signora Porporina will discover the cause of our sorrow soon enough."

"I am not laughing at him, dear aunt. Albert is extremely well this morning, and I am delighted to see him better than he has ever been, perhaps, since I have been here."

"His calm and healthy air has indeed struck me very agreeably," replied the canoness; "but I dare no longer hope to see such a favorable condition continue."

"How noble and good he looks!" said Consuelo, wishing to win the canoness's heart.

"You think so?" said Amelia, transfixing her with a mocking look.

"Yes, I think so," said Consuelo, "and I told you so last night, signora. Never has a human face filled me with more respect."

"Ah, dear child!" said the canoness, dropping all her stiffness, and warmly pressing Consuelo's hand; "good hearts understand each other! I was afraid that my poor boy would frighten you. It is such a pain for me to read on the faces of others the repulsion which such suffering always inspires. But you are sympathetic, I see, and understand that in this diseased and afflicted body there is a sublime soul, well worthy of a better lot."

Consuelo was moved to tears by the words of the good canoness, and kissed her hand with emotion. She already felt more sympathy and confidence in this old hunchback than in the brilliant and frivolous Amelia.

They were interrupted by Baron Frederick, who had plucked up enough courage to come and ask a favor of Signora Porporina. He was still more awkward with women than his elder brother (it seems that this awkwardness was a family failing, so that its extraordinary development in Albert was not astonishing), and he stammered some words, mingled with apologies, which his daughter undertook to interpret to Consuelo.

"My father wishes to ask you," she said, "if you feel brave enough to return to music, after so trying a journey, and if it will not be trespassing too far on your kindness to ask you to listen to my voice and criticise my singing."

"With all my heart," said Consuelo, rising quickly, and going to open the clavichord.

"You will see," whispered Amelia, as she arranged her music on the rack, "that this will put Albert to flight, in spite of your bright eyes and mine."

And indeed, Amelia had hardly begun the prelude when Albert got up and went out on tiptoe, like one who flatters himself that he is not noticed.

"It is a great deal," said Amelia, still in a low voice, as she played out of time, "that he did not slam the doors furiously, as he often does when I sing. He is quite amiable, one might even say gallant, to-day."

The chaplain, thinking that he was masking Albert's retreat, drew near the clavichord, and pretended to listen attentively. The rest of the family formed a

semicircle and awaited respectfully the judgment which Consuelo should pronounce on her pupil.

Amelia bravely chose an air from Pergolese's "Achille in Scyro," and sang it boldly from one end to the other, with a fresh and piercing voice, and such a comical German accent that Consuelo, who had never heard anything like it, had all she could do not to smile at every other word. She did not need to listen to four bars to know that the young baroness had no true notion of music, nor any musical intelligence. She had a flexible voice, and might have been well taught; but her character was too flighty for her to study anything conscientiously. For the same reason, she had no doubt of her own powers, and plunged with German cold-bloodedness through the most involved and difficult passages. She failed in them all without being in the least disconcerted, and fancied that she was concealing her awkwardness by forcing her voice and pounding the accompaniment. She recovered the time when she could by adding beats to the measures which followed those she suppressed, and she changed the character of the music so entirely that Consuelo would not have recognized it if she had not had it before her eyes.

Meanwhile, Count Christian, who understood music perfectly, but thought that his niece was as embarrassed as he would have been in her place, kept saying, to encourage her, "Good, Amelia, good! Very pretty, indeed."

The canoness, who knew but little about it, looked

anxiously in Consuelo's eyes to guess her opinion ; and the baron, who cared for nothing but the music of his hunting-horn, thought that his daughter sang too well for him to understand it, and waited confidently for the judge's expression of approval. The chaplain alone was charmed by this screaming, for he had never heard anything like it till Amelia came to the castle, and he kept nodding his large head with a blissful smile.

Consuelo saw that to tell the naked truth would be to appall the whole family. She waited to enlighten her pupil in private concerning all that she would have to forget before she could learn anything, praised her voice, asked her about her work, and approved of the masters whom they had given her to study, avoiding in this way the necessity of saying that she had studied them all wrong.

The family separated, well satisfied with a trial which had been painful to nobody but Consuelo. She had to go and shut herself up in her own room with the music which she had just heard profaned, and read it over to herself, singing it in her mind, before she could drive away the disagreeable impression which she had received.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN the family came together again towards evening, Consuelo, feeling more at ease with all these people whom she was beginning to know, replied less reservedly and laconically to the questions which they on their side were emboldened to ask her concerning her art, her country and her travels. She carefully avoided speaking of herself, as she had resolved, and described the scenes and events amid which she had passed her life without in the least revealing the part which she had taken in them. The curious Amelia endeavored in vain to turn the conversation upon herself. Consuelo did not fall into her traps or betray the incognito which she had decided to preserve. It would be difficult to say why this mystery had an especial charm for her. Many reasons prompted her to it. In the first place, she had sworn to Porpora to keep herself so completely concealed that it would be impossible for Anzoletto to obtain any trace of her, in case he should attempt to find her. This was a very unnecessary precaution, for Anzoletto, after having had some idea of seeking for her, which he had speedily abandoned, was wholly occupied with his debuts and his success in Venice.

In the second place, Consuelo, who wished to gain the affection and esteem of the family which was

affording her a temporary refuge in her sorrow and loneliness, understood perfectly that they would receive her far better as a simple musician, Porpora's pupil, and a teacher of singing, than as a celebrated prima donna and a favorite of the footlights. She realized that if her history were known, she would have a much more trying position in a simple and pious family, and it is probable that in spite of Porpora's recommendation, the arrival of Consuelo the debutante, the marvel of San-Samuel, would have somewhat frightened these good people. But if these two powerful motives had not existed, Consuelo would still have felt a desire to be silent, and to let no one into the secret of her brilliant but unhappy past. Everything in her life was inextricably intermingled, — her power with her weakness, her glory with her love. She could not raise a corner of the veil without revealing one of her wounds, and these wounds were too painful and too deep for any human power to heal. The only solace which she felt, on the contrary, was in the sort of barrier which she had erected between her painful memories and the calm of her new life. The change of country, of surroundings and of name bore her suddenly into an unknown world, where, by playing a new part, she hoped to become a new being.

This surrender of all the vanities which would have consoled another woman was the salvation of this courageous soul. When she renounced all human pity as well as all human glory, she felt a heavenly strength came to her aid. "I must find at least a

part of my old happiness," she said to herself, "that part which consisted in loving others and in being loved by them. When I sought their admiration they withdrew their love, and the honors which they gave me in place of their affection were too dearly bought. I will become obscure and humble again, so that I may have no enemies, no one to envy me or to wound my heart by ingratitude. The smallest mark of sympathy is sweet, but the greatest display of admiration is mingled with bitterness. If there are strong and haughty souls for which praise is all-sufficient, and which a triumph can console, mine is not one of them, as I have learned to my sorrow. Alas! glory has robbed me of my lover's heart; may humanity, at least, repay me with a few friends!"

This was by no means Porpora's idea. In removing Consuelo from Venice and from the dangers and sufferings of her passion, he had intended only to give her a few days of rest before recalling her to the scene of ambition, and launching her anew amid the storms of an artist's life. But he did not know his pupil. He believed her more of a woman, that is, more changeable than she was. As he thought of her at that moment, she did not appear to him calm, affectionate, and busied about the welfare of others, as she had already had the strength to become. He pictured her drowned in tears and filled with regrets. But he thought that a great reaction would soon take place in her, and that he would find her cured of

her love and eager to renew the practice of her art and the exercise of her genius.

The pure and religious conception which Consuelo had formed of the part which she was to play in the Rudolstadt family endued her words, her actions and her appearance with a holy serenity from the very first. Any one who had seen her in the old days, radiant with love and joy in the sunshine of Venice, would not easily have understood how she could suddenly become quiet and affectionate among entire strangers, in the heart of sombre forests, with her love blasted in the past and hopeless for the future. It was because goodness gathers strength where pride would yield to despair. Consuelo was beautiful that evening with a beauty which she had not yet revealed. Her loveliness was neither the torpidity of a great nature which does not yet know itself and awaits awakening, nor the expansion of a power which, surprised and delighted, is preparing to wing its flight. It was neither the half-concealed and incomprehensible beauty of the gypsy scholar, nor the splendid and radiant beauty of the triumphant prima donna: it was the sweet, winning charm of a woman who knows herself and rules herself by holy purposes.

Her old hosts, who were simple and affectionate, needed no aid save that of their generous instincts to perceive, if I may use the figure, the mysterious perfume which the angelic soul of Consuelo exhaled in their intellectual atmosphere. As they looked at her they experienced a sense of moral well-being for

which they could not account, but whose comfort filled them with a new life. Albert himself seemed for the first time in the full and free enjoyment of his faculties. He was considerate and affectionate towards every one, and he spoke to Consuelo several times in a way which showed that he had not lost, as they had feared, the lofty intelligence and enlightened judgment with which nature had endowed him. The baron did not go to sleep, the canoness did not once sigh, and Count Christian, who was accustomed to sink melancholy into his chair, crushed by age and sorrow, stood with his back to the fire in the midst of his family circle, taking part in the unconstrained and almost playful conversation which lasted without pause until nine o'clock.

"God seems to have granted our fervent prayers," said the chaplain to the count and the canoness, who had remained in the drawing room after the baron and the young people had withdrawn. "Count Albert entered this morning upon his thirtieth year, and this solemn day, which we have all awaited anxiously, has passed off with inconceivable calmness and happiness."

"Yes; let us give thanks to God," said the old count. "I do not know whether it is a happy dream which he has sent us to comfort us for a moment; but I have been convinced during this whole day, and especially this evening, that my son is permanently restored."

"I beg your pardon, brother," said the canoness,

“and yours, chaplain, who have always thought that Albert was tormented by the enemy of mankind. I have ever believed him the victim of two opposing powers which were fighting for his poor soul ; for often when he seemed to be repeating the words of the evil spirit, Heaven would speak by his mouth a moment later. Recollect what he said last night during the storm, and his last words when he left us, ‘The peace of the Lord has descended upon this house.’ Albert felt that a miracle of grace was being accomplished in him, and I have faith in his cure as in the divine promises.”

The chaplain was too timid to accept suddenly such a bold proposition. He extricated himself from his embarrassment, as he always did, by saying, “Let us trust in eternal wisdom ; God reads the hidden things of this world ; the mind should seek refuge in God,” and other remarks which were more consoling than novel.

Count Christian was divided between a desire to accept the somewhat exaggerated mysticism of his sister and the respect inspired by the scrupulous and prudent orthodoxy of his confessor. He changed the subject by speaking of Porporina, and praising her admirable bearing. The canoness, who already loved her, spoke yet more highly of her, and the chaplain gave his sanction to the affection which they felt for her.

It did not occur to them that the miracle which had taken place among them might be due to her

presence. They were grateful for the benefit without knowing whence it came; and this is all Consuelo would have asked of God, if she had been consulted. Amelia's observations had been a little more accurate. She knew that her cousin, when he chose, had enough self-control to hide the disorder of his mind from people whom he distrusted, as well as from those for whom he had especial regard. In the presence of certain members of his family, or of friends who inspired him with like or dislike, he had never by any outward action betrayed the eccentricity of his character. Therefore, when Consuelo expressed her surprise at what she had heard the night before, Amelia, who was secretly irritated, endeavored to revive in her the fear of Count Albert which the stories had already created.

"Ah, my poor friend," said she, "do not trust to this deceitful calmness! It is the interval which always occurs between two attacks. You saw him to-day as he was when I came here last year. Alas! if you were destined by the will of another to become the wife of such a visionary, and if, to overcome your tacit resistance, they had tacitly agreed to keep you a captive in this frightful castle, with a continual diet of surprises, terrors and anxieties, and with tears, exorcisms and extravagances for your only diversion, while they await a cure which they are always expecting, but which will never happen, you would be as disenchanted as I am with Albert's fine manners and with the sweet speeches of the rest of the family."

"It is not possible," said Consuelo, "that they can wish to marry you against your will to a man whom you do not love. You seem to me to be the idol of the family."

"They will not force me to do anything; they know very well that it would be impossible. But they will forget that Albert is not the only husband who may suit me, and Heaven knows when they will give up the vain hope of seeing me recover the affection for him which I felt at first. And then my poor father, who has a passion for the chase, and has an opportunity to gratify it here, is very well satisfied in this wretched castle, and always puts forward some pretext to delay our departure, which has been discussed twenty times, but never decided upon. Ah! if you only knew, dear Nina, some secret for destroying in a night all the game in the neighborhood, you would do me the greatest service which any human being could render me."

"Unfortunately, I can only try to amuse you by making music with you, and by talking with you in the evenings when you do not feel like sleeping. I will try to be an anodyne and a narcotic to you."

"You remind me," said Amelia, "that I have the rest of my story to tell you. I will begin, that I may not keep you up too late."

"Several days after his mysterious absence, which he still believed had lasted only seven hours, Albert suddenly noticed that the abbe was no longer at the castle, and asked where they had sent him."

“‘His presence being no longer necessary,’ they replied, ‘he has gone about his business. Had you not noticed it before?’

“‘I noticed,’ said Albert, ‘that something was wanting to my suffering, but I did not know what it was.’

“‘Do you suffer a great deal, Albert?’ asked the canoness.

“‘A great deal,’ he answered, in the tone of a man who had been asked how he had slept.

“‘Was the abbe very disagreeable to you?’ asked Count Christian.

“‘Very,’ replied Albert, in the same tone.

“‘Why did you not tell us this sooner, my son? How could you bear so long the presence of a man who was disagreeable to you without letting me know of your dislike? Can you doubt, dear child, that I would have put an end to your suffering as soon as possible?’

“‘It was but a trifling addition to my sorrows,’ said Albert, with frightful tranquillity, ‘and your kindness, which I never doubted, dear father, could have lightened them but little in giving me another keeper.’

“‘Say rather another travelling-companion, my son. The expression you use does but scant justice to my love.’

“‘It was your love which caused your anxiety, dear father! You could not know the pain you gave me in sending me away from you and this house, where my place was appointed by God until the time

set for the accomplishment of his designs concerning me. You thought that you were laboring for my cure and my well-being ; I, who understood better than you what was proper for us both, knew that I ought to assist and obey you. I knew my duty and I have done it.'

" ' I know your goodness and your affection for us, Albert, but can you not explain your meaning more clearly? '

" ' That is very easy,' said Albert, ' and the time to do it has come.'

" He spoke so calmly, that we thought we had at last reached the happy moment when his nature would cease to become a painful enigma to us. We pressed about him and encouraged him by our looks and our caresses to unburden himself entirely for the first time in his life. He appeared finally decided to show us this confidence and spoke as follows : —

" ' You have always considered me, and you still consider me, an invalid and a madman. If I had not an infinite veneration and love for you all I should, perhaps, dare to measure the depth of the abyss which separates us, and show you that you are in a world of error and prejudice, while Heaven has opened to me a sphere of light and truth. But you could not understand me without giving up all that constitutes your faith, your religion and your security. When, carried away in spite of myself by bursts of enthusiasm, a few imprudent words escape me, I quickly perceive that I have inflicted a frightful pain

upon you in wishing to banish your chimeras and hold up before you the dazzling light which I bear in my hands. All the details and habits of your lives, all the fibres of your hearts, all the springs of your intelligence are so bound, interlaced, and riveted to the yoke of lies and the law of darkness, that I seem to be giving you death when I wish to give you faith. Yet there is a voice which cries to me, waking and sleeping, in storm and in sunshine, to enlighten and convert you. But I am too loving and feeble a man to undertake it. When I see your eyes filled with tears, your heaving bosoms, and your mournful faces; when I feel that I fill you with grief and terror, I fly and hide myself, to resist the calls of my conscience and the commands of my destiny. That is my ill, that is my torment, that is my cross and my punishment. Do you understand me now?’

“My uncle, my aunt and the chaplain understood, up to a certain point, that Albert had constructed for himself a morality and a religion wholly different from theirs; but, timid like all devout people, they were afraid of going too far, and no longer dared to encourage his frankness. As for me, who then knew but vaguely the particulars of his childhood and early youth, I did not understand at all. Besides, at that time I was nearly in the same position as you, Nina. I knew very little about Hussitism and Lutheranism, of which I have heard so often since then, and the controversies concerning which, waged between Albert and the chaplain, have wearied me so intolerably. I

therefore waited impatiently for a fuller explanation, but it did not come.

“‘I see,’ said Albert, struck by the silence about him, ‘that you do not wish to understand me, for fear of understanding me too well. Let it be as you will ! Your blindness long ago pronounced my sentence. Eternally unhappy, eternally alone, eternally a stranger amid those I love, I have no refuge and support but the consolation which has been promised me.’

“‘What is this consolation, my son?’ said Count Christian, mortally grieved ; ‘can it not come from us, and can we never understand each other?’

“‘Never, father. Let us love each other, since that alone is permitted us. God is my witness, that the immense, the irreparable difference between us has never diminished the love I bear you.’

“‘And is not that enough?’ said the canoness, taking one of his hands, while his father pressed the other between his own. ‘Can you not forget your strange ideas, your odd beliefs, to live in affection among us?’

“‘I do live in affection. It is a blessing which brings sweetness or bitterness as our religious beliefs are alike or opposed. Our hearts are united, dear aunt, but our intelligences are at war, and it is a great misfortune for us all. I know that it will not end for several centuries, and that is why I am awaiting the blessing that is promised me in this century, and which gives me strength to hope.’

“‘What is this blessing, Albert? Can you not tell me?’

“ ‘No, I cannot tell you, because I do not know. But it will come. My mother has never let a week go by without telling me of it in my sleep, and all the voices of the forest repeat it to me when I question them. An angel often hovers above the Rock of Terror, and shows me her pale and luminous face. In this sinister spot, beneath the shade of the oak, where, when my contemporaries called me Ziska, I was filled with the wrath of the Lord, and became for the first time that instrument of his vengeance ; at the foot of that rock where, when I was called Wratislaw, I saw the mutilated and disfigured head of my father, Withold, fall beneath a sabre-stroke, — a terrible expiation, which taught me the meaning of grief and pity, — that fatal day of atonement, when the Lutheran blood washed away the Catholic, and which made of me a weak and tender man instead of the fanatic and destroyer I had been a hundred years before —

“ ‘Merciful Heaven !’ cried my aunt, crossing herself, ‘there is his madness coming back !’

“ ‘Do not interrupt him, sister,’ said Count Christian, with a great effort to control himself ; ‘let him explain. Speak, my son ; what did the angel say to you at the Rock of Terror?’

“ ‘It told me that my consolation was drawing nigh,’ said Albert, his face radiant with enthusiasm, ‘and that it would visit my heart when I had finished my nine-and-twentieth year.’

“My uncle let fall his head upon his breast.

Albert seemed to allude to his death, when he spoke of the age at which his mother had died, and it appears that she had often predicted in her illness that neither she nor her son would reach the age of thirty. I have been told that my Aunt Wanda had supernatural powers also, but I have never been able to learn much about this. It is too painful a memory for my uncle, and no one ventures to recall it.

“The chaplain endeavored to banish the sad thoughts to which this prediction had given rise by inducing Albert to explain himself concerning the abbe. It was in regard to him that the conversation had begun.

“Albert made an effort to reply to him. ‘I speak to you of things divine and eternal,’ he said, after a little hesitation, ‘and you recall me to the short moments which are passing, to puerile and fleeting cares which I was already forgetting.’

“‘Speak on, my son, speak on,’ said Count Christian, ‘we must understand you to-day.’

“‘You have never understood me, father, and you never will, in what you call this life. But if you wish to know why I travelled, why I endured this faithless and careless guardian whom you attached to my steps like a greedy and lazy dog to a blind man’s arm, I will tell you in few words. I had made you suffer enough. It was necessary to relieve you of the sight of a son who was disobedient to your teachings and deaf to your remonstrances. I knew well that I should never be cured of what you called my mad-

ness, but it was needful to leave you peace and hope, and I consented to go away. You made me promise that I never would leave without your consent the guide you had given me, and that I would allow him to conduct me through the world. I wished to keep my promise, and I also wished him to be able to maintain your hope and your tranquillity by recounting to you my calmness and my patience. I have been calm and patient. I closed my ears and my heart against him, and he had the wit not even to try to make me open them. He led me about, dressed and fed me like a child. I relinquished the life I preferred ; I have become accustomed to seeing misfortune, injustice and madness rampant through all the earth. I saw men and their institutions, and indignation gave place in my heart to pity when I perceived that the unhappiness of the oppressed was less than that of the oppressors. In my childhood I loved only the victims, but I have been filled with charity for the executioners, wretched penitents who undergo in this generation the punishment for crimes which they committed in former existences, and whom God condemns to be wicked, — a torture a thousand times worse than to be their innocent victims. That is why I no longer give alms except to relieve myself personally of the weight of riches, without tormenting you with my sermons, knowing that it is not yet time to be happy, since, to speak humanly, the time to be good is still afar.'

“‘And now that you are free from this keeper, as

you called him, now that you can live quiet without having beneath your eyes the spectacle of that wretchedness which you relieve without having any one to interfere with your generosity, can you not make an effort to banish you inward agitation?’

“‘Ask me no more, dear friends,’ replied Albert, ‘I will say no more to-day.’

“He kept his word, and better, for he did not open his mouth for a week.”

END OF VOLUME I.

